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EXTRACTS
FROM
T H E W O R K S
OF

ROBERT BOLTON, B.D.

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INSTRUCTIONS

FOR

RIGHTLY COMFORTING AFFLICTED CONSCIENCES.

PROVERBS XVIII. 14.

The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?

MY text lies, as you see, in a sacred cabinet of jewels; I mean the most select and wise aphorisms, or Proverbs of Solomon: every one of them, from the tenth chapter, independent, entire, and absolute in themselves; clear and manifest by their own native brightness. Whence it is, that this book of Proverbs is compared to a great heap of gold rings, every one shining with a distinct sense by itself; but other parts of Holy Writ to gold chains, so linked together, that they must, for the rendering unto us their several senses, receive illustration one from another.

This present proverb doth represent unto us the extremest hell upon earth, the greatest misery, and most unsupportable that can befall a man in this life; I mean the horror of a guilty and enraged conscience. “A wounded spirit who can bear?” This is indeed intolerable: and that for several reasons.

1. In all other afflictions only the arm of flesh is our adversary ; we contend but with creatures at most ; we have to do but with man, or at worst with devils : but in this we conflict immediately with God himself ; frail man with Almighty God ; sinful man with that most holy God, “ Whose eyes are purer than to behold evil, and who cannot look upon iniquity. Who then can stand before his indignation ? Who can abide in the fierceness of his anger ? When his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him ? When he comes against a man as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, to rend the caul of his heart ? ” No more than the driest stubble can resist the fiercest flame ; nay, infinitely less can any power of man or angel withstand the mighty Lord of heaven and earth, when he is angry for sin. Alas ! when a poor, polluted wretch, upon some special illumination by the word, or extraordinary stroke from the rod, doth once begin to behold God’s frowning face against him ; and to feel justice, by an invisible hand, taking secret vengeance upon his conscience ; his heavy heart immediately melts away in his breast, and becomes as water. He faints and fails, both in the strength of his body, and stoutness of his mind. His bones, the pillars, and master-timber of his earthly tabernacle, are presently broken in pieces, and turned into rottenness. His spirit, the eye, and excellency of his soul, which should make lightsome the whole man, is quite put out, with excess of horror, and flashes of despair. O, this is it, which would not only crush the courage of the stoutest son of Adam, that ever breathed upon earth ; but even of the most glorious angel that ever shone in heaven, should he lift up but one rebellious thought against his Creator ! This alone is able to make the tallest cedar in Lebanon, the strongest oak in Basan, (I mean the highest look and the proudest heart,) to bow and bend, to stoop and tremble, “ as the leaves of the forest, that are shaken with the wind.”

2. In all other adversities, a man is still a friend unto himself, and reaches out his best considerations to bring in comfort to his heavy heart. But in this, he is a scourge to himself; at war with himself; an enemy to himself. He doth greedily and industriously fetch in as much matter as he can, both imaginary and true, to aggravate his horror. He gazes willingly in that false glass, which satan sets before him; wherein, by his hellish malice, he makes an infinite addition both to the already unnumbered multitude, and to the true heinousness of his sins. Nay, in this amazedness of spirit, and disposition to despair, he is apt, even of his own accord, and with great eagerness, to arm every several sin, as it comes into his mind, with a particular bloody sting, that it may strike deep and stick fast enough in his already grieved soul. He employs and improves the excellency, and utmost of his learning, understanding, wit, memory, to argue with all subtilty, with much sophistry, against the pardonableness of his sins, and possibility of salvation. He wounds even his wounds, with a conceit they are incurable, and vexes his very vexations, with refusing to be comforted. Not only crosses, afflictions, temptations, and all matter of discontent; but even the most desirable things in this life, and those which minister most outward comfort; wife, children, friends, goods, great men's favours, preferments, offices, even pleasures themselves, every thing; whatsoever is within him, or without him, or about him; whatsoever he thinks upon, remembers, hears, sees, turns all to his torment. No marvel then, if the terror of a wounded conscience be so intolerable.

3. As spiritual refreshments do incomparably surpass all bodily delights; so afflictions of the soul infinitely exceed the most exquisite tortures, that can possibly be inflicted upon the body. For the soul is a spirit, very subtle, quick, active, stirring, all life, motion, sense, feeling; and therefore far more capable of all kinds of impressions, whether of pleasure, or of pain.

4. A wounded spirit is tempered with such strong and strange ingredients of extraordinary fears, that it makes a man "a terror to himself, and to all his friends: to flee when none pursues, at the sound of a shaking leaf;" to tremble at his own shadow; "to be in great fear, where no fear is:" besides the insupportable burden of too many real terrors, it fills his dark and dreadful fancy with a world of feigned terrors, ghastly apparitions, and imaginary hells; which notwithstanding have real stings, and impress true tortures upon his trembling heart.

5. Not only the desperate cries of many miserable men of forlorn hope, but also the complaints even of God's own children, discover the terrors and intolerableness of a wounded conscience. Hear how three ancient worthies in their times, wrestled with the wrath of God in this kind: "I reckoned till morning," saith Hezekiah, "that as a lion, so will he break all my bones." Even as the weak and trembling limbs of some lesser beast are crushed and torn in pieces by the irresistible paw of an unconquerable lion; so was his troubled soul terrified and broken with the anger of the Almighty. He could not speak for bitterness of grief, and anguish of heart; "but chattered like a crane or a swallow, and mourned like a dove." "Thou writest bitter things against me," saith Job, "and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth. The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison thereof drinketh up my spirit: the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me. O that I might have my request! And that God would grant me the thing that I long for! Even that it would please God to destroy me, that he would let loose his hand, and cut me off." Nay, yet worse: "Thou scarest me with dreams, and terrifiest me through visions: so that my soul chooseth strangling and death, rather than life." Though God in mercy preserves his servants from the monstrous act of self-murder; yet, in some horror of mind, they are not free from sudden suggestions thereunto. "My bones waxed old," saith David, "through

my roaring all the day long. Day and night thy hand was heavy upon me. My moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore. There is no soundness in my flesh, because of thine anger: neither is there any rest in my bones, because of my sin. For mine iniquities are gone over my head: as an heavy burden, they are too heavy for me.—I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long.—I am feeble, and sore broken, I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart.”

Hear also, into what a depth of spiritual distress three worthy servants of God, in these latter times, were plunged and pressed down under the sense of God's anger for sin. Blessed Mrs. Brettergh, upon her last bed, was horribly hemmed in with the sorrows of death. The very grief of hell laid hold upon her soul. “A, roaring wilderness of woe was within her,” as she confessed of herself. She said, “My sins have made me a prey to satan. I wish that I had never been born, or that I had been made any other creature, rather than a woman.” She cried out many times, “Woe, woe, woe, be unto me, a weak, a woeful, a wretched, a forsaken woman:” the tears continually trickling from her eyes. Mr. Peacock, that man of God, in that dreadful visitation upon his death-bed, recounting some smaller sins, burst out into these words, “And for these, I feel now an hell in my conscience.” Upon other occasions, he cried out, with piteous groans, “Oh, me, wretch! Oh, mine heart is miserable! Oh, oh, miserable and woeful! The burden of my sin lieth so heavy upon me, I doubt it will break my heart. Oh! how woeful and miserable is my state, that thus must converse with hell-hounds!” When by-standers asked, if he would pray; he answered, “I cannot.” Suffer us, say they, to pray for you. “Take not,” replied he, “the name of God in vain, by praying for a reprobate.” What grievous pangs, what sorrowful torments, what boiling heats of the fire of hell that

blessed saint of God, John Glover, felt inwardly in his spirit, (saith Fox,) no speech outwardly is able to express. In which intolerable griefs of mind, although he neither had, nor could have any joy of his meat, yet was he compelled to eat against his appetite, to defer, (as he said,) the time of his damnation; thinking with himself, that he must needs be thrown into hell, the breath being once out of his body.

I dare not pass out of this point, lest some child of God should be here discouraged, before I tell you, that every one of these three last named was at length blessedly recovered, and did rise most gloriously out of the depth of spiritual misery, before their end. Hear Mrs. Brettergh's triumphant songs, after the return of her Well-beloved; "O Lord Jesu, dost thou pray for me? O blessed and sweet Saviour, how wonderful! how wonderful! how wonderful are thy mercies! Oh, thy love is unspeakable, thou hast dealt so graciously with me! O my Lord and my God, blessed be thy name for evermore, who hast shewed me the path of life! Thou didst, O Lord, hide thy face from me for a little season, but with everlasting mercy thou hast had compassion on me. And now, blessed Lord, thy comfortable presence is come; yea, Lord, thou hast had respect unto thine hand-maid, and art come with fulness of joy, and abundance of consolations. O blessed be thy name, my Lord and my God! O the joys! the joys! the joys that I feel in my soul! Oh, they are wonderful! they are wonderful! they are wonderful! O Father, how merciful, and marvellously gracious art thou unto me! yea, Lord, I feel thy mercy, and I am assured of thy love; and so certain as I am, thou art the God of truth, even so sure do I know myself to be thine, O Lord, my God! This my soul knoweth right well. This my soul knoweth right well. O blessed be the Lord! O blessed be the Lord, that hath thus comforted me, and hath brought me now to a place more sweet unto me, than the garden of Eden! Oh, the joy, the joy, the delightful joy that I feel!—O praise the

Lord for his mercies, and for this joy which my soul feeleth full well ! Praise his name for evermore !” Hear with what heavenly comforts Mr. Peacock’s heart was refreshed, “ Truly, my heart and soul,” (saith he, when the tempest was something allayed,) “ have been deeply troubled with temptations, and stings of conscience, but I thank God, they are eased in good measure.” Afterward, by little and little, more light did arise in his heart, and he brake out into such speeches as these : “ I do, God be praised, feel such comfort, from that, what shall I call it ?” “ Agony,” said one that stood by ; “ Nay,” quoth he, “ that is too little. Oh ! the sea is not more full of water, nor the sun of light, than the Lord of mercy ! yea, his mercies are ten thousand times more. What great cause have I to magnify the great goodness of God, that hath humbled, nay, rather exalted, such a wretched miscreant to a state so glorious ! The Lord hath honoured me with his goodness ! I am sure he hath provided a glorious kingdom for me. The joy that I feel in mine heart is incredible.” And as for Mr. Glover, though he suffered the most sharp temptations and strongest buffetings many years ; yet the Lord graciously preserved him all the while, and at last did rid him out of all discomfort ; and he lived a kind of life of heaven upon earth.

6. But to return to my purpose : no art of man, no earthly comfort, or created power, can heal or help in this case. Heaven and earth, men and angels, friends and physic, gold and silver, pleasure and preferments, favour of princes ; nay, the utmost possibility of the whole creation, must let this alone for ever. An almighty hand, an infinite skill, must take this in hand, or else no cure can be effected in this world or the world to come. Bodily diseases may be eased and mollified by medicines ; poverty may be repaired and relieved by friends : there is no imprisonment without some hope of enlargement : innocency and neglect may wear out disgrace : grief for loss of a wife, a child, or other dearest friend, at last is

lessened, and utterly lost by length of time : but not the most exquisite concurrence of all these can help at all in this case. In such an agony, hadst thou the utmost aid from angels and men ; couldst thou reach the top of the most aspiring ambition ; were thy possessions as large as east and west ; were thy meat manna from heaven ; were thy body clothed with the body of the sun, and crowned with stars ; yet for all this, thy heart within thee would be as cold as a stone, and tremble infinitely above the heart of a woman entering into travail. For, alas ! who can stand before the mighty Lord God ? Who dare plead with him, when he is angry ? What spirit of man hath might to wrestle with his Maker ! Who is able to make an agreement with the hells of conscience ? or to put to silence the voice of desperation ? Oh ! in this conflict, no electuary of pearl or precious balm, nor the most exquisite extract art itself can create, is able, any whit, to revive, ease, or assuage. It is only the hand of the Holy Ghost, by the blood of that blessed Lamb, “Jesus Christ the righteous,” which can bind up such a bruise. Let those who are already washed from their sins, learn hence, that they defile their souls no more ; that they “turn not again to folly.” Let them lay to heart the ensuing considerations, when they are first tempted again to any sin : which, methinks, should be of power, not only to keep God’s blessed ones from putting their hands to iniquity ; but also to restrain even the devil’s slaves in the most furious enticement to their best-beloved sin.

1. Sin is most hateful. It is the only object of God’s infinite hatred. His love is carried upon variety of objects. He loves, in the first place, infinitely, his own blessed self ; his own Son, who is called the “Son of his love ;” his angels ; his saints ; his servants ; his creatures ; all things he made. “Thou lovest all things that are, and abhorrest nothing which thou hast made. For never wouldst thou have made any thing, if thou hadst hated it.” But he hates nothing at all, properly, but *sin*. The whole infiniteness of all his hatred is spent upon sin

alone ; which makes it infinitely and extremely hateful. Now, what a thing is this, that an infinite, Divine hatred, like a mighty, undivided torrent, should, with all its united forces, run headlong, and rest upon every sin ; be it but an officious lie, foolish talking, jesting, revelling, a wanton glance, a vain thought, an idle word, and such like lighter sins in the world's account ; which to reprove in some company, nay, almost any where, would be esteemed unsufferable preciseness : so desperately impudent are the times, both in disgracing of sincerity, and daubing of sin ! And what a wretch is every impenitent sinner, who hath such a world of unpardoned sins lying upon his soul, and such an immeasurable weight of hatred lying upon every several sin ! And what a madman is he, who will wittingly and willingly put his hand to any sin, which, once committed, is inseparably attended with the infinite hatred of so great a God !

2. It is most foul : even fouler than the foulest fiend in hell, than the devil himself. Let none stumble at this truth. It appears unanswerably thus : sin made him a devil, and sunk him into hell ; and therefore, sin is more rank than the devil, and horrible than hell itself. The sun that lightens all other bodies, is much more light ; the fire which heats all other things, is much more hot : so that which defiles another thing is much more filthy. Sin alone brought all hellish misery upon satan, and made him so foul ; therefore it is far fouler. If any could strip him of his sins, he would re-invest him with the robes of all his angelical perfection ; and restore him into heighth of favour again with the Most High : for God hates the devil for nothing else in the world but for sin.

3. It is full of most fearful effects. For, 1st. It deprives every impenitent : 1. Of the favour and loye of God, the only fountain of all comfort, peace, and happiness ; which is the most invaluable loss that can be imagined. 2. Of his portion in Christ's blood ; of which,

though the drops, weight, and quantity be finite, and measurable, yet the person that shed it hath stamped upon it such excellency of merit, that any one had infinitely better have his portion in that Well-Spring of life and immortality, than enjoy the riches, pleasures, and glory of the whole world everlastingly. 3. Of the most blissful presence and communion of the Holy Ghost; and all those Divine illuminations and rays of heavenly light, wherewith that good Spirit is wont to visit and refresh the humbled hearts of holy men. 4. Of the fatherly providence and protection of the blessed Trinity, the glorious guard of angels, comfortable communion with the people of God, and all the safety, deliverance, and delight that flow thence. 5. Of the unknown pleasures of an appeased conscience, to which all human glory is but dust in the balance. Not the most exquisite music can convey so delicious a touch to the outward ear of a man, as the sound of a certificate brought from the throne of mercy by the blessed Spirit, sealed with Christ's blood, to the ear of the soul, even amidst the most desperate confusions, in the evil day; when comfort will be worth a world, and a good conscience, ten thousand earthly crowns. 6. Of all true contentment in this life; of all Christian right to, and religious interest in, any of the creatures. For never was any sound joy, or sanctified enjoyment of any thing in the world, found in that man's heart, which gives allowance to any lust, or lies delightfully in any sin. 7. Of an immortal crown, the unspeakable joys of heaven; that immeasurable, and endless comfort, which there shall be fully and for ever enjoyed, with all the children of God, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, Christian friends; yea, with the Lord himself, and all his holy angels, with Christ our Saviour, that Lamb slain for us, the Prince of glory, the glory of heaven and earth, the brightness of the everlasting light.

2dly. It doth every hour expose the sinner to all those evils, which a man destitute of grace may commit; and

unprotected from above endure. It brings all plagues.

1. Internal; blindness of mind, hardness of heart, deadness of affection, searedness of conscience, a reprobate sense, strong delusions, the spirit of slumber, slavery to lust, estrangedness from God, bondage under the devil, desperate thoughts, horror of heart, confusion of spirit: and spiritual mischiefs in this kind are more dreadful than either tongue can tell, or heart can think. 2. External. And 3. Eternal.

3dly. By its pestilent damning poison, it turns heaven into hell, angels into devils, life into death, light into darkness, hope into despair, love into hate, mercy into cruelty, liberty into bondage, health into sickness, a garden of Eden into a desolate wilderness, a fruitful land into barrenness, peace into war, order into confusion, blessings into curses; in a word, all kinds of temporal and eternal bliss, into all kinds of miseries and woe.

4thly. What heart, except it be all adamant, but, possessing itself with a sensible apprehension of the incomprehensible greatness, excellency, and dreadfulness of the mighty Lord of heaven and earth, would tremble to transgress any one branch of his blessed laws, or to sin against him willingly, even in the least ungodly thought? For alas! who art thou, that liftest up thy proud heart, or whettest thy profane tongue, or bendest thy rebellious course against such a majesty? Thou art the vilest wretch that ever God made, next unto the devil and his damned angels; a base and unworthy worm of the earth, not worthy to lick the dust, that lieth under thy feet; the dream of a shadow, the very picture of change, worse than vanity, less than nothing. When thy breath is gone, which may fall out many times in a moment, thou art turned into dust, nay, rottenness and filth, much more loathsome than the dung of the earth; and all thy thoughts perish. But on the other side, if thou cast thine eye seriously upon that thrice glorious Majesty, the eyes of whose glory thou so provokest, thou mayest justly upon the commission of every sin, cry out, "O heavens be astonished at this!" Nay, thou mightest marvel that

the whole frame of heaven and earth is not for one sin, fearfully and finally dissolved: for He, against whom thou sinnest, "inhabiteth eternity, and unapproachable light. The heaven is his throne, and the earth his footstool." He is the "everlasting God, mighty, and terrible, the Creator of the ends of the earth." The infinite splendour of his glory and majesty so dazzles the eyes of the most glorious seraphim, that they are glad to adore him with covered faces. The devil, all the damned spirits and fiends tremble at the terror of his countenance. "All the nations before him are but as the drop of a bucket, but as the small dust of the balance. He sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers. At his rebuke the pillars of heaven shake; the earth trembleth, and the foundations of the hills are moved. His presence melts the mountains; his voice tears the rocks in pieces, the blast of the breath of his nostrils discovers the channels of waters, and foundations of the world. His garments are light, his pavilion darkness; his way is in the whirlwind, and in the storm; and the clouds are the dust of his feet." "The Lord of Hosts is his name;" whose power and punishments are so perfectly irresistible, that he is able, with one word, to turn all the creatures in the world into hell; nay, even with the breath of his mouth, to turn heaven and hell, and earth, and all things into nothing. How darest thou then, so base and vile a wretch, provoke so great a God?

5thly. Let the consideration of the immortality of that precious soul, that lies in thy bosom, curb thy corruptions at the very first sight of sin, and make thee step back as though thou wert ready to tread upon a serpent. Not all the men upon earth, or devils in hell, can possibly kill the soul of any man. It must needs live as long as God himself, and run parallel with the longest line of eternity. Only sin wounds mortally that immortal spirit, and brings it into that cursed case, that it had infinitely better never have been, than be for ever. For

by this means, going on impenitently to that last tribunal, it is ever in the pangs of death, and never dead; not able to die, nor endure the pain; pain exceeding not only all patience, but all resistance: there being no strength to sustain, nor ability to bear, that which, whilst God is God, for ever must be borne. What a prodigious cruelty is it then for a man, by listening to the Syren songs of this false world, or the devil's desperate counsel, to imbrue his hands in the blood of his own everlasting soul, and to make it die eternally? For some fleeting vanity, to bring upon it in the other world, torments without end, and beyond all compass of conception? And his madness is the more, because, (besides its immortality,) his soul is incomparably more worth than the whole world. "The very sensitive soul of a little fly," saith Austin truly, "is more excellent than the sun!" How ought we then to prize, and preserve from sin, our reasonable souls, which make us in that respect, like unto the angels of God?

6thly. The inestimableness of the price that was paid for the expiation of it, doth clearly manifest the execrable misery of sin. I mean, the blood of Jesus Christ, blessed for ever; which was of such preciousness and power, that being let out by a spear, it amazed the whole frame of nature, darkened the sun, shook the earth, opened the graves, clave the stones, rent the veil of the temple from the bottom to the top. Now, it was this alone, and nothing but this, could possibly cleanse away the filth of sin. Had all the dust of the earth been turned into silver, and the stones into pearls; should the whole world, and all the creatures in heaven and earth have offered themselves to be annihilated before his angry face: had all the blessed angels prostrated themselves at the foot of their Creator; yet, in the point of the redemption of mankind, and purgation of sin, not any, nor all of these, could have done any good at all. Nay, if the Son of God himself, which lay in his bosom, should have supplicated and solicited, (I mean, without suffering and

shedding his blood,) the Father of all Mercies, he could not have been heard in this case. Either the Son of God must die, or all mankind be eternally damned.

7thly. When thou art stepping over the threshold towards any vile act, or to do the devil service, in any kind; suppose thou seest Jesus Christ coming towards thee, as he lay in the arms of Joseph of Arimathea, newly taken down from the cross, wounded, wan, and pale; his body all gore-blood; the beauty of his blessed and heavenly face darkened and disfigured by the stroke of death, and speaking thus unto thee: "Oh! go not forward upon any terms; commit not this sin by any means. It was this and the like that drew me down out of the arms of my Father, from the fulness of joy, and fountain of bliss, to put on this corruptible and miserable flesh; to hunger and thirst; to watch and pray; to groan and sigh; to offer up strong cries and tears to the Father, in the days of my flesh; to drink the dregs of the bitter cup of his fierce wrath; to wrestle with all the infernal powers; to lay down my life in the gates of hell, with intolerable pain; and thus now to lie in the arms of this mortal man, all torn and rent in pieces, as thou seest." What an heart hast thou, that darest go on, against this dear intreaty of Jesus Christ.

Thus I have tendered many reasons to restrain from sin; which, by the help of God, may serve to take off the edge of the most eager temptation; to embitter the sweetest bait that draws to any sensual delight. Now, my earnest intreaty is, that every one into whose hands, by God's Providence, this book shall fall, after the perusal of them, would pause awhile, on purpose that he may more solemnly vow, that ever hereafter, when he shall be assaulted by allurements to any sin, he will first have recourse unto these considerations; and let them sink into his heart, before he proceed and pollute himself. I could be content, if it were pleasing unto God, that these lines, which thou now readest, were writ with the warmest blood in mine heart, to represent

unto thine eye, the dear affection of my soul, for thy spiritual and eternal good ; so that thou shouldst be thoroughly persuaded, and now, before thou pass any further, sincerely promise so to do.

Learn hence, that high and heavenly art of *comforting afflicted consciences* ; which, were it well known and practised, what a world of torture in troubled minds would it prevent ? So many thousands of poor, deluded souls, would not perish, by the damning flatteries and cruel mercies of unskilful daubers.

In this essay of mine, on this important subject, I first desire to discover and rectify some ordinary errors about spiritual cures. Which fall out, when the physician of the soul,

I. Applies unseasonably the cordials of the gospel. Were it not absurd in surgery, to pour a most sovereign balsam upon a sound part ? It is far more senseless, to proffer the blood of Christ, and promises of life to an unwounded conscience. It is the only right method, (and all the men of God, and master-builders, who have ever set themselves sincerely to serve God in their ministry, have followed the same course,) First, to wound by the law, and then to heal by the gospel. We must be "humbled in the sight of the Lord, before he will lift us up," Jam. iv. 10. We must be sensible of our spiritual blindness, captivity, and poverty, before we can heartily seek to be savingly enlightened, enlarged from the devil's slavery, and enriched with grace. There must be a sense of misery, before shewing of mercy : Crying, "I am unclean, I am unclean," before opening the fountain for uncleanness ; stinging before curing by the brazen serpent ; smart for sin, before a plaster of Christ's blood ; brokenness of heart, before binding up. God himself opened the eyes of our first parents, to make them see their sin and misery, nakedness and shame, Gen. iii. 7, before he promised Christ, ver. 15. Christ Jesus tells us, that he was anointed by

the Lord, "to preach good tidings." But to whom? To the *poor*; to the *broken-hearted*, Isa. lxi. 1, Luke iv. 18. That the "whole need not a physician, but they that are sick;" and that "he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance," Matt. ix. 12, 13, (that is, poor souls, sinners in their own apprehension, and not self-conceited pharisees.) That "he will give rest;" but to whom? To those "that labour and are heavy laden," Matt. xi. 28. That the *Spirit* which he would send, should *convince the world*; first, *of sin*, and then, *of righteousness*.

It is ordinary with the prophets, first, to discover the sins of the people, and to denounce judgments; and then to promise Christ. Isaiah, in his first chapter, from the mouth of God, in the first place, acts like a son of thunder, pressing upon the consciences of those to whom he was sent, many heinous sins, horrible ingratitude, fearful falling away, formality in God's worship, cruelty, and the like. Afterward, ver. 16, 17, he invites to repentance: and then follows ver. 18, "Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Nathan, to recover David, convinceth him first, soundly of his sin, with much aggravation and terror; and then, upon his remorse, assures him of pardon, 2 Sam. xii. 13.

Consider further for this purpose, 1. the sermons of our blessed Saviour himself; who "taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes." With what power and piercing did our Lord and Master labour to open the eyes, search the hearts, and wound the consciences of his hearers, to fit them for the gospel? 2. Of Peter, Acts ii. who being now freshly inspired and illuminated from above, bends himself to break the hearts of his nearers. Amongst other piercing passages of his searching sermon, he tells them to their faces, That they had *crucified and slain* that just and holy One, the Lord of life, Jesus of Nazareth, ver. 23. And again, at the close,

ver. 36, leaves the same bloody sting in their consciences ; which restlessly wrought and boiled within them, until it begot a great deal of compunction, terror, and tearing of their hearts with extreme amazement and anguish. “ Now, when they heard this, they were pricked to the heart,” ver. 37 Whereupon they came crying unto Peter, and the rest of the apostles, “ Men and brethren, what shall we do ?” And so being seasonably led by the counsel of the apostles, “ to believe on the name of Jesus Christ ;” * to lay hold on the *promise*, to *repent* evangelically, they had the *remission of sins* sealed unto them by baptism, and were happily received into the number of the saints of God. 3. Of Paul, who, though he stood as a prisoner at the bar, and might, perhaps, by a general, plausible discourse, without piercing or particularizing, have insinuated himself into the affections, and won the favours of his hearers, who were to be his judges ; yet, for all this, he preaches a right searching, terrifying sermon, of “ righteousness, temperance, and a judgment to come,” Acts xxiv. 24, 25 ; and severely galls the conscience of that great man, Felix, by opposing *righteousness* to his bribing cruelties ; *temperance* to his adulterous impurities ; the dreadfulness of *judgment to come*, to his lawless outrages and desperate security.

Orthodox antiquity was of the same mind, and for the same method. So St. Austin : “ The conscience is not to be healed, if it be not wounded. Thou preachest and professest the law, comminations, the judgment to come, and that with much earnestness and importunity. He which hears, if he be not terrified, if he be not troubled, is not to be comforted. Another hears, is stirred, is stung, is distressed extremely : cure his contritions, because he is cast down and confounded.” “ After that John the Baptist,” says Chrysostom, “ had thoroughly frightened his hearers with the terror of judgment, and expectation of torment ; when he had thus tamed their stubbornness, and from fear of so many evils, stirred

them up to a desire of deliverance ; then, at length, he makes mention of Christ."

" God pours not the oil of his mercy," says Bernard, " save into a broken vessel." So also are all our modern divines, who are instructed unto the kingdom of heaven. " Christ is promised to them alone," saith Calvin, " who are humbled, and confounded with the sense of their sins." " Then is Christ seasonably revealed," saith Musculus, " when the hearts of men being soundly pierced by preaching repentance, are possest with a desire of his gracious righteousness." " The way to faith," saith Beza, " is penitence, legal compunction ; because sickness enforceth men to fly unto the physician." " Men are ever to be prepared for the gospel, by the preaching of the law." " A sermon of the law," said Tilenus, " must go before the doctrine of the gospel, that the oil of mercy may be poured into a contrite vessel." " In our exhortations to follow Christ," saith Rolloc, " the minds of men are ever to be prepared with a sense of misery ; and afterward with a desire of enlargement."

" It is the care of those ministers, which divide God's Word aright," say our great divines of Great Britain, " first fitly and wisely to wound the consciences of their hearers with the terrors of the law, and afterwards to heal them by the promises of the gospel." " The Spirit first terrifies those who are to be justified, with the law ; breaking and humbling them with threats, scourges, and lashes of conscience, that thereby, despairing of themselves, they may flee unto Christ." " The doctrine of the law," saith Davenant, " is to be propounded to the impious and impenitent, to strike terror into their hearts, and to demonstrate their just damnation, except they repent, and fly to Jesus Christ."

" The course warranted unto us by the Scriptures," saith Hieron, " is this : First, To endeavour the softening of our hearers' hearts, by bringing them to the sight and sense of their own wretchedness, before we adventure to

apply the riches of God's mercy in Christ Jesus. The preaching of the gospel is compared, by our Saviour himself, unto the sowing of seed : as therefore the ground is first torn up with the plough, before the seed be committed unto it : so the fallow ground of our hearts must be broken up with the sharpness of the law, and the terrors of the Lord, before we can be fit to entertain the sweet seed of the gospel.—I would have a preacher to preach peace, and to aim at nothing more than the comfort of the souls of God's people ; yet I would have him frame his course to the manner of God's appearing to Elijah. The text saith, That first a mighty strong wind rent the mountains, and brake the rocks. Then, after that came an earthquake, and after the earthquake came fire. And after all these, then came a still and soft voice. After the same manner, I would not have the still and mild voice of the gospel come, till the strong tempest of the law hath rent the stony hearts of men, and have made their bellies to tremble, and rottenness to enter into their bones. Or, at least, because our auditories are mixed, consisting of men of divers humours, it will be good for him to deliver his doctrine with that caution, that neither the humbled souls might be affrighted with the severity of God's judgments, nor the profane and impenitent grow presumptuous by the abundance of God's mercy. The person that is full, despiseth the honeycomb, saith Solomon : and what doth a proud pharisee, or a churlish Nabal, or a politic Gallio, or a scoffing Ishmael, care to hear of the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the love of God in his Son Jesus ? Except it be to settle them faster upon their lees. Doctrine of that nature is as unfitting to such uncircumcised ears, as the snow to the summer, and the rain to the harvest. Unto the horse belongs a whip, to the ass a bridle, and a rod to the fool's back.—He that intendeth to do any good in this frozen generation, had need rather to be Boanerges, one of the sons of thunder, than Bar-Jonah, the son of a dove."

“The Word of God,” saith Forbes, “hath three degrees of operation in the hearts of men. For, first it falleth to men’s ears as the sound of many waters, a mighty great and confused sound, and which commonly bringeth neither terror nor joy, but yet a wondering, and acknowledgment of a strange force. This is that effect which many felt, hearing Christ, when they were ‘astonished at his doctrine, ‘as teaching with an authority;’ and said, ‘What manner of doctrine is this? Never man spoke like this man.’ The next effect is, *the voice of thunder*; which, bringeth not only wonder, but fear also, not only filleth the ears with sound; but moreover shaketh and terrifieth the conscience. The third effect is, *the sound of harping*, while the Word not only ravisheth with admiration, and striketh the conscience with terror; but also, lastly, ‘filleth it with sweet peace and joy.’ Now, albeit the first two degrees may be without the last; yet none feel the last, who have not, in some degree, felt the first two.”

“God healeth none,” saith Gouge, “but such as are first wounded. ‘The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.’ Christ was anointed ‘to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted.’ But it may be objected, many have believed, who never grieved for their misery, as Lydia. I answer: Who can tell that these grieved not? It followeth not that they had no grief, because none is recorded. All particular actions and circumstances of actions are not recorded. It is enough that the grief of some, as of the Jews, of the jailor, of the woman that washed Christ’s feet with her tears, and of others, is recorded. Lydia might be prepared before she heard Paul. For she accompanied them which went out to pray, and she worshipped God: or else her heart might be then touched, when she heard Paul preach. The like may be said of those which heard Peter, when he preached to Cornelius; and of others. Certain it is, that a man must both see and feel his wretchedness, and be wounded in soul for it, before faith can be wrought in him. Yet, I deny it not, that there

may be great difference in the manner and measure of grieving."

"The heart is prepared for faith," saith another, "and not by faith. Justification, being the work of God, is perfect in itself: but our hearts are not fit to apply it, until God have humbled us, brought us to despair in ourselves. The whole preparation being legal, wrought by the spirit of bondage, to bring us to the spirit of adoption, leaves us in despair of all help, either of ourselves, or the whole world; that so, being in this woeful plight, we might now submit ourselves to God, who, infusing a lively faith into our hearts, gives us his Son and our justification with him."

"The law," saith Throgmorton, "first breaks us, and kills us with the sight and guilt of sin, before Christ cures us, and binds us up. The Holy Ghost worketh by three acts: 1. First, it puts an efficacy into the law, and makes that powerful to work on the heart; to make a man poor in spirit; so that he may be fit to receive the gospel. The spirit of bondage must make the law effectual; as the spirit of adoption doth the gospel. 2. The second work is, to reveal Christ, when the heart is prepared by the Spirit in the first work; then, in the next place, he shews the unsearchable riches of Christ, what is the hope of his calling, and the glorious inheritance prepared for the saints; what is the exceeding greatness of his power in them that believe. I say, we need the Spirit to shew these things. 3. The third act of the Spirit is, the testimony which he gives to our spirit, in telling us that these things are ours. When the heart is prepared by the law; and when these things are so shewed unto us, that we prize them, and long after them, yet there must be a third thing: to take them to ourselves, to believe they are ours: and there needs a work of the Spirit for this. For though the promises be never so clear, yet having nothing but the promises, you will never be able to apply them to yourselves. But when the Holy Ghost shall say, Christ is thine, all these things be-

long to thee, and God is thy Father ; when that witnesses to our spirit by a work of his own, then shall we believe."

By this time it most clearly appears, what a foul and fearful fault it is, for men, either in the managing their publick ministry, or more private conferences, visitations of the sick, consultations about a good estate to Godward, and other occasions of like nature ; to apply Jesus Christ and the promises to souls, as yet, not soundly afflicted with a sight of sin, and sense of God's wrath ; to consciences never truly wounded and awaked. I have insisted the longer upon this point, because I know it full well to be a most universal and prevailing policy of the devil, whereby he keeps many thousands in his cursed slavery ; to confirm as many pastors as he can possibly, willing enough to drive their flocks before them to damnation, in an ignorant, or affected prejudice, and forbearance of that saving method of bringing souls out of hell ; and to nourish also in the hearts of natural men, a strong and sturdy distaste, opposition, and raging against upright dealing, and those men of God, (able as they say, by their terrible teaching to drive their hearers to distraction,) who take the only right course to bring them to Jesus Christ as he himself invites them, to wit, *labouring, and heavy laden* with their sins. Daubers then, who serve satan in this kind, are a generation of dangerous men ; excellent in an accursed art of conducting poor, blinded souls merrily towards everlasting misery ; and setting them down in the very midst of hell, before they are sensible of any danger.

To remedy this, mine advice is, that all those who deal with others about their spiritual states, and undertake to direct in that high and weighty affair of men's salvation, either publicly or privately, should follow that course taken by God himself, his prophets, his Son, the apostles, and all those men of God in all ages, who have set themselves, with sincerity and all good conscience, to seek God's glory in the salvation of men's souls ; to wit, That they should labour in the first place, by the application

of the law, to convince and terrify those that they have to do with, with a sensible, particular apprehension of their wretchedness and miserable state, by reason of their sinfulness : to break their hearts, bruise their spirits, humble their souls, wound and awake their consciences ; to bring them by all means to that legal astonishment, trouble of mind, and melting temper, which the ministry of Paul and Peter wrought upon the hearts of their hearers ; that they may come to those men of God who fastened those arrows of compunction in the sides of their consciences, crying from the heart, “ Men and brethren, what shall we do ? Sirs, what must we do to be saved ? ” As if they had said, “ Alas ! we see now, we have been in hell all this while ; and if we had gone on a little longer, we had most certainly lain for ever in the fiery lake. The devil and our own lusts were carrying us headlong towards endless perdition. Who would have thought we had been such abominable beasts, and abhorred creatures as your ministry hath made us. Now help us out of this gulf, or we are lost everlastingly. We will with our hearts, ‘ pluck out our right eyes, cut off our right hands ; ’ part with our beloved lusts, and dearest sinful pleasures ; abominate, and abandon them all for ever, from the heart to the pit of hell. If we can be rid of the devil’s fetters, with which we have been so long bound, Christ’s yoke shall be welcome. In a word, we will *sell all*, even our sins, so that we may enjoy our blessed Jesus, whom, you have told us, and we now believe, *God hath made both Lord and Christ.* ”

When we find the hearts of our hearers and spiritual patients thus prepared, both in legal dejections and terrors from the spirit of bondage ; and also possessed with such melting and eager affections, wrought by the light of the gospel, and offer of Christ : when their souls once begin to feel all sins, even their best beloved one, heavy and burdensome ; to prize Jesus Christ far before all the world ; to thirst for him infinitely more than for any earthly thing ; to resolve to take him as their husband,

and to obey him as their Lord for ever : then we may minister comfort. Then, upon good ground, we may go about our Master's command, Isa. xl. 10, " Comfort ye, comfort ye my people ; speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her war is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned." We may tell them, with what compassion God himself labours to refresh them ; Isa. liv. 11, " Oh, thou afflicted, and tossed with tempest, thou hast no comfort ; behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires." We may assure them in the Word of life and truth, that Jesus Christ is theirs, and they are his ; and compel them, as it were, by an holy violence, to take his person, his merit, his blood, all his spiritual riches, privileges, excellencies : and with him possession of all things, even of the most glorious Deity itself, blessed for ever. But until a sense of spiritual misery and poverty raise an hunger and thirst after Jesus Christ ; before such affections, as have been spoken of, be wrought in the hearts of men, by pressing the law, and that in sincerity ; (for the degree and measure, we leave it to God, in some they may be stronger, in some weaker,) the preaching or promising of mercy, as already belonging unto them, is more unseasonable than *honour for a fool*. It is the very scaling them up with the spirit of delusion, that they may never so much as think of taking the right course to be converted. What sottish and sacrilegious audaciousness then is it in any dauber to thrust his profane hand into the treasury of God's mercy, and there, hand over head, without any allowance from his highest Lord, to scatter his dearest pearls amongst swine !

Yet we must by no means conceive of the forenamed preparative humiliations by the law, as of any meritorious qualifications to draw on Christ, (for he is given most freely,) but as of needful predispositions, to drive us unto Christ. For a man must feel himself in misery, before he will go about to find a remedy ; be sick, before he will seek the physician ; be in prison before he will

sue for a pardon; be wounded before he will prize a plaster. A sinner must be weary of his former ways, and tired of his legal terror, before he will have recourse to Jesus Christ for refreshing, and lay his bleeding soul in his blessed bosom. He must be sensible of his spiritual poverty, beggary, and slavery under the devil, before he thirst kindly for heavenly righteousness, and willingly take up Christ's sweet and easy yoke. He must be cast down, confounded, condemned, and lost in himself, before he will look about for a Saviour. He must cry heartily, "I am unclean, I am unclean," before he will long and labour to wash in that "fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness." He must *sell all*, before he will be willing and eager to "buy the treasure hid in the field."

In pressing the law, besides other directions, let them take notice of this particular, which may prove very available to begin this legal work; *pressing upon men's consciences with a zealous, discreet powerfulness, their special, principal, fresh-bleeding sins, is a notable means to break their hearts, and bring them to remorse.* That most heinous sin of killing Jesus Christ, in which they had newly imbrued their hands, pressed upon the consciences of Peter's hearers, broke their hearts in pieces, Acts ii. 23, 36, 37. So adultery, secretly intimated by Christ's words, unto the woman of Samaria, John iv. 18, seems to have struck her to the heart, ver. 19. So the Jews, having idolatry pressed upon their consciences by Samuel, 1 Sam. vii. 3—6, strange wives by Ezra, chap. x. 9, were mightily moved.

A man's principal sin, is satan's strong hold. When he is in danger to be dislodged, and driven by the power of the Word out of the other parts of the soul, and from possession of a man by all other sins, he retires hither, as to his castle. And therefore if this be battered about his ears, he will be quickly forced to quit the place. It may be good counsel then, to say unto those men of God, who desire to drive the devil out of others, in some sort, as the king of Syria said to his captains, "Fight

neither with small nor great, save only with the king of Israel." My meaning is ; let them address the sharpest edge of their spiritual sword, yet as well with an holy discretion, as with resolute dealing, against those sins, which bear greatest sway in them they have to deal with : be it their covetousness, ambition, lust, drunkenness, lukewarmness, or what other sin soever. No sin must be spared, but let the reigning sin be paid home especially.

After this, is the time for opening the most rich mines of all those sweetest mercies, folded up within the bowels of God's dearest compassions, and of the mystery of his love through the Son of his love ; to allure those that are without, to come in, and to stir up our hearers to bring broken hearts, bruised spirits, bleeding souls unto the throne of grace. The most desperate rebels heretofore, upon true remorse for their former sins, resolving sincerely to stand on God's side for ever hereafter, may safely thus reason within themselves, " Alas ! we have done very villanously ; we have served satan a long time ; we walked up and down as condemned men, ripe for destruction long ago ; hell itself even groans for us ; and yet we will try ; we will go and throw down ourselves before the throne of grace in dust and ashes, and cry as the publican did unto the great God of heaven : for he is a ' merciful God, gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin.' " And then, not only *peradventure*, but most *certainly*, they shall be received to mercy, and he will save the life of their souls. And after plentifully magnifying the mercy of God, by its infiniteness, freeness, and incomparable excellency, on purpose to assure the greatest sinners of most certain pardon, if they will immediately turn from satan to the living God ; we must take heed, as much as in us lies, that no impenitent wretch, none that goes on in his trespasses, or lies willingly in any one sin, receive any comfort by any such discourse ; but only thence conceive,

that if he will presently lay down his arms, and come in with a truly penitent humbled soul, there is no number nor notoriousness of sins, that can hinder his gracious entertainment at God's mercy-seat.

In proposing of Christ, let the man of God set out, as much as he can possibly, the excellency of his person, the preciousness of his blood, the riches of his heavenly purchases, the gracious sweetness of his invitations, the *generality, and freeness of his offers*, the glorious privileges he brings with him; reconciliation to God, justification, righteousness, wisdom, sanctification, redemption, possession of all things; "for all things are yours," said St. Paul to believers, "whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas; or the world, or life, or death; or things present, or things to come; all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's," 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23. Let him tell his hearers, that the blood of Christ is called the blood of God, Acts xx. 28, and therefore of infinite merit, and invaluable price. It sprang out of his human nature; but the person that shed it, being the Son of God, did set upon it such an excellency of virtue and value, that the infiniteness of its merit, and inestimableness of its worth, lasts everlastingly. It will be as fresh and effectual, to wash away the sins of the last man that shall be called upon earth, as it was those of the penitent thief, who saw it with his bodily eyes, gushing out of his blessed side upon the cross; or the first man who savingly apprehended that promise, "The Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." Let him assure them it is so sovereign, that in a truly broken, humbled, and thirsty soul, it turneth the most *scarlet* and *crimson* sins into *snow*: that, upon compunction, it washed away that horrible and bloody guilt, from the souls of them that spilt it, Acts ii. Let them know also, in how high a degree, and heinously they offend from time to time, who refuse to take Jesus Christ offered most freely, and without exception of any person, every sabbath, every sermon. Oh! little do people think, who sit under our ministry,

unaffected by the word, what a grievous and fearful sin they commit, and carry home from the house of God, day after day; in neglecting so great salvation, in forsaking their own mercy, and in judging themselves unworthy of everlasting life; I mean, by choosing, upon a free offer of his soul-saving blood, to cleave rather to sin, (horrible indignity!) than to Jesus Christ, blessed for ever. This not believing, this refusing Christ, this not taking him in the manner and sense I have described, is a most transcendant sin, the greatest sin, the sin of sins. It is, indeed, the main, and the master sin: this remaining, the guilt of all other sins abides upon the soul; this removed, all other sins are remitted.

Now what can you say for yourselves, that you stand out? Why come you not in? If the devil would give you leave to speak out; one would say, "I had rather be damned than leave my drunkenness." Another, "I love the world better than Jesus Christ." A third, "I will not part with my gainful trade of usury, for the treasure hid in the field;" and so on. So that upon the matter, you must needs all confess, that you "judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life;" that you commit such a wickedness, that all the creatures in heaven and earth, cry shame upon you for it. Nay, and if you go on without repentance, you may expect that the hellish gnawing of conscience for this one sin of refusing Christ, may perhaps hold scale with the united horrors of all the rest.

What is the matter I marvel, that you will not entertain the match? If we stand upon honour, and noble family; he that makes love and suit unto our souls, "hath on his vesture, and on his thigh, a name written, King of kings, and Lord of Lords." If upon beauty; hear how he is described, Cant. v. 10, "My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest of ten thousand. His countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars; he is altogether lovely." The Spirit of God by these outward beauties, labours, in in some measure, to shadow out the incomparable excellency of inward graces; the dignity, the glory, the

spiritual fairness of Jesus Christ, that we may know, that he is wholly and altogether lovely. If upon ease, and contentment, he can lead us to "fulness of joy, and pleasures at God's right hand for evermore." If we desire honourable alliance, he will bring us to "an innumerable company of angels to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven; and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect." If we stand upon wealth, we shall have all things with him. If we respect love; "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

The blessed Jesus, "being the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person," came down from his bosom, the fulness of joy, and that unapproachable light, into an house of flesh. He passed through a life full of all manner of vexations, miseries, persecutions, indignities, and slanders. He was hunted long, and at last violently hailed by a pack of hell-hounds, to a cruel and bloody death, which for the extremity and variety of pains, for the enraged spite of the executioners, for the innocency and excellency of the person suffering, the like never was, shall, or can be endured. His passions were such, so bitter, and unsupportable, that they would have made any mere creature to have sunk down under the burden of them to the bottom of hell. He was tortured extremely, and suffered grievous things both in body and soul, from heaven, earth and hell. His blessed body was given up as an anvil to be beaten upon, by the violent, and villanous hands of wretched miscreants, without all measure of mercy; until they had left no one part free from some particular and special torment. His skin and flesh were rent with scourges; His hands and feet were pierced with nails. His head with thorns; his very heart with the spear. All his senses, all his parts, indeed his whole sacred body was made a spectacle to angels and to men, of all the most base and barbarous usage, which

malice could devise, and cruelty execute. And all this was but a shadow of his suffering. The substance of his suffering, was the agony of his soul. Give me any affliction save the affliction of the mind. His soul, though he was the Prince of Glory, and Lord of heaven and earth, upon the cross was even as a scorched heath, without so much, as any drop of comfort either from heaven or earth. The grievous weight of all the sins of all his children, the least of which had been enough to have pressed them down into the bottom of hell, lay now heavy upon him. The powers of darkness were let loose to afflict him. He wrestled with the fierce wrath of his Father, and all the forces of the infernal kingdom, with such anguish of heart, that in the garden it wrung out of his precious body, a "sweat, as it were great drops of blood, falling down to the ground;" with such agony of spirit, that upon the cross, he cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!"

And the measure of all these sufferings and sorrows were such, that all the creatures, save sinful men only, both in heaven and earth, seemed to be amazed and moved with them. The sun in the heavens drew in his beams, unwilling, as it were, to see the spotless blood of the Son of God spilt as the water upon the ground. The earth itself shrunk, and trembled under it. The very rocks were rent asunder, as if they had had sense and feeling of his intolerable pains. The whole frame of nature seemed astonished at the mournful complaint of the Lord of the whole world. These, and far more than these, or than can be expressed, our blessed Saviour, being Son of the most high God, endured for no other end, but to ransom us from the bondage of satan, and of hell, in a thirsting desire of saving all penitent sinners; and to offer himself freely, a most glorious and everlasting husband to all those, who with broken and believing hearts, cast themselves into his bosom. Such unutterable perfections, beauties, endowments, sufferings, and

inflamed affections, as these, in the heavenly suiter unto our sinful souls, doth mightily aggravate the horrible sin of refusing him.

In this manner, would I have the men of God to magnify, enlarge, and represent to the hearts of their hearers, all the excellencies of Jesus Christ, with the worth, merit, and efficacy of his blood ; to set out to the utmost, the glory of the Gospel, with all the riches of mercy and free grace, revealed and offered therein ; so that they tell them withal, that Jesus Christ takes none, but such as are willing to take upon them his yoke ; that he gives himself to none, but such as are ready to sell all, that they may enjoy his blessed self : that the glorious grace of the gospel shines savingly to none, but such as deny ungodliness, and worldly lusts ; and live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world ; that those whose souls are cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ from all sin, are only such as walk in the light, as God is in the light ; who make conscience of shunning all sins, and works of darkness, discovered to them by the light of God's holy book, and sincerely set their hearts and hands, with love, and careful endeavour, to every duty enjoined therein. In a word, that, as that fountain, the blood of that immaculate Lamb, doth turn all the sins, even the very scarlet and crimson of a truly broken heart, and every true mourner in Zion, into snow and wool ; so it will never wash away the least sinful stain from the proud heart of any unhumbléd pharisee ; that hereby no strangers unto the love and life of godliness, may be deceived by appropriating unto themselves any of these glorious things, which are only proper to the sealed Fountain ; but only conceive of them as excellent motives to cause them to come in. I would have the preaching of Christ fill the soul of every true-hearted Nathanael every time with unspeakable and glorious joy, with all those evangelical pleasures, "which neither eye hath seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man." But I would have it only make every unregenerate man

sensible what infinite blessedness he bereaves himself of by continuing a rebel ; that thereupon he may be moved to make haste out of his present hell, into this heaven so freely offered unto him.

Such points as these, are wont to make attentive natural men to startle in their seats, to look about them, to divide the precious from the vile ; to distinguish that one happy state of grace, from all states of unregenerateness ; to tell them out of the book of God, how far a man may go, and yet come short of heaven ; to deliver marks of sincere professors, of a saving faith, of true repentance, of a sound conversion. But I would have this done with a great deal of spiritual wisdom, with much godly discretion, and caution ; lest thereby, either the formal professor be encouraged, or the weakest Christian disheartened.

II. I come now to another error, about comforting afflicted consciences ; which is, when the spiritual physician applies the promises, assures of mercy and pardon.

1. When the ground of grief is not in truth trouble for sin, but some outward trouble. Some, in such a case, cast out by the way some faint complaints of their sins, and seem to seek direction about the state of their souls ; when the principal spring of their heaviness is some secret earthly discontentment, the bitterness of some worldly sting. It may be the loss, or desperate course, of a child ; going backward in their estate ; disappointment of marriage ; some great disgrace ; long and tedious sickness, or the like. In this case, after the man of God hath discovered the impostures, let his endeavour be to turn the torrent of worldly tears upon sin. When a vein is broken, and bleeds inwardly, the physician is wont to open a vein in the arm, so to divert the current of the blood, that it may be carried the right way, for the preservation of the party. Act in a similar manner in this point. Let such know : first, that “the sorrow of the world worketh death ;” that it dries the bones, consumes the marrow, chills the blood, wastes the spirits, eats up the heart, short-

eneth life, and cutteth off from the day of gracious visitation. Secondly, that the sorrow which, when misplaced upon earthly things, fills a man with swarms of carking confusions, being turned upon former sinful courses, which is the only right, proper, profitable use thereof, may procure a great deal of ease and enlargement to the heavy spirit, and help to “bring forth fruits meet for repentance.” Thirdly, that the tythe, perhaps, of that sadness, about wordly things, if sincere, and set upon the right object, might serve to drive us unto Christ for saving repentance.

2. When it is not any kindly touch of conscience for sin produced by the ministry ; but terrors arising from the dark mists of melancholy, which cause a man to complain ; satan hath great advantage to raise, and represent to the imagination many fearful things and temptations to despair, or self-destruction. Whereupon the party so afflicted, is wont out of impatience, to address himself to some man of God, some noted physician of the soul ; not from any resolution to become a new man, but only through hope of ease ; not aiming at all, at any other change, but from present melancholy to former mirth. In this case, let the aid of physic be employed ; and then let the party be advised to spend the sadness of that uncomfortable constitution, in sorrowing for sin, in trembling at the threats of God’s judgments, in fearing to offend, and fleeing under the wings of Christ for sanctuary ; that so he may bring supernatural lightsomness into his soul, by pardon from God, and evangelical pleasures. It is incredible to consider, what advantage a gracious man hath, by his sweet communion with Jesus Christ, and those refreshing beams of comfort which shine from his face, to conquer this wild humour. If the very darkness of the hellish dungeon were in the heart ; yet reaching out the hand of faith, and receiving Christ, that blessed Sun of Righteousness, would dispel and disperse it to nothing. Much more the light of grace and heavenly wisdom, may, in some good measure, dissolve the mists

of this earthly humour. Religion then, does not make melancholy men mad ; as the wise men of this world would persuade us ; who, when they hear, or see any such disorder to have seized upon any, that desires to be saved, cry, “ You see now, what becomes of so much reading the Scriptures, and prayer ! ” Now the Lord rebuke thee, satan, and return as dung upon thine own face, this villanous, base, and wicked slander, which by thy graceless instruments thou labourest to cast upon the glorious face of Christianity.

I have known, when the only wise God hath suffered, for ends seen good by his heavenly wisdom, the raging humour of melancholy to darken the native clearness of the animal spirits in the brain, and to disorder the imagination in his dearest child, even to distraction. But is this owing to prayer, or reading or hearing the Holy Scripture ? Is it possible for the most sovereign antidote sent from heaven by God himself against the sting and venom of all heart-grief and horror ; the sacred sun of saving truth, which is only able to ennoble and glorify our understandings with wisdom from the breast of the everlasting counsel of Jesus Christ, to become the cause of discomfort, and dissettlement of the soul ? No, no. There is such a quickening, healing, and mighty efficacy and vigour shed into it from the Father of Lights, and shining in it from the face of Christ, that by the help of the blessed Spirit, it can turn darkness into light, death into life, hell into heaven, the deepest horror into the height of joy. I say all this, lest melancholick men should be misled, or disheartened by the cursed counsel of carnal friends, and wicked clamours of the world, from turning their sadness into sorrow for sin ; and from applying to God’s blessed Book, and the powerful ministry thereof ; the only well-spring of all true light and joy ; and able, as I said before, if they will be counselled, to dispel the very darkness of hell out of their hearts. Methinks, they rather above others, should be encouraged thereto :

1 Because they have an advantage, when it pleaseth

God to sanctify for that purpose, and set on work the spirit of bondage, by reason of their sad dispositions, and fearful spirits ; more feelingly to take to heart the miseries and dangers of their natural state ; more easily to tremble and stoop under the mighty hand of God. They are wont to taste deeper of legal contrition and remorse, and so proportionably to feel a greater necessity of Jesus Christ ; to thirst after him more greedily, to prize him more highly, and, at length, to throw their trembling souls into his blessed bosom with more eagerness and importunity. And having once entered into the holy path, their native fearfulness being rectified, and turned the right way, they many times walk forward, with more fear of offending, (and “happy is the man that feareth always”) more watchfulness over their ways, tenderness of conscience, impatience of losing spiritual peace, and sensibility of infirmities.

2. And because of all others, such men have most need of refreshing ; which, when carnal counsellors, and flattering mountebanks of the ministry, labour to introduce into their dark heads and heavy hearts, by outward mirth, and such other means, they only palliate and daub ; and are so far from doing any true good, that thereby they sink them deeper. So that a melancholy man, let him turn which way he will, is likely, without the light of grace, to live a very miserable life. But let them address themselves to the Book of Life ; let them lean their sorrowful souls upon the promises there ; and each will shine upon them with an heavenly, healing light, with sound and lasting joy. All those then are infatuated either with ignorant or learned malice, who encourage the world to suppose that reading the Scriptures, attending a powerful ministry, taking sin to heart, will make melancholy men mad.

3. When complaint of sin is confused only and in general. Many deal with God and his ministers in confession of their sins, saith a good divine, “as Nebuchadnezzar with his enchanters about his dream. That he

had dreamed, he told them, and desired an interpretation, but what his dream was he could not tell. So many confess themselves sinners ; but wherein they have sinned, they cannot or will not tell. And how is it possible the physician should help him, who only says, he is not well, but will not tell him how ? I have sometimes visited those, who, being pressed to a sight and sense of their sinfulness, on purpose to fit them for Christ, have acknowledged in general, that they were sinners ; but descending to the particulars of the law, justified themselves throughout. Nay, many in this case, are so destitute of matter of humiliation for sin, that they can scarce tell you what sin is. At the most, they have not learned, or think that there is any other breach of the seventh commandment, but the gross act of uncleanness ; that there is any sin against the ninth, but giving in false witness against their neighbour in open court. And so in the other commandments. Likewise, although they have heard of Jesus Christ, yet, to the knowledge of his person, offices, excellency, sweetness, effectual ministry, and of his whole mystery, they are mere strangers. And so, when they should be brought by knowledge and application of the law and gospel, through the pangs of the new birth, into the holy path, they have to learn the very first principles of religion ; in which they have not so much skill as I could teach a child of five or six years old in a few days.

By reason of this affected ignorance in the law of God, it comes to pass, that many, in trouble of mind, complain of sin confusedly, and in general only. And thereupon they expect comfort, and perhaps many draw it from some daubers. Whereas, particularizing of our sins is a necessary precedent, and preparative to a sound humiliation. And therefore in this case we must deal with such, as surgeons are wont to do with a tumour, or swelling in the body ; who first apply to the affected place, drawing and ripening plasters, to bring the sore to an head, that the corruption may have issue, and then

heal ; so a general complaint of sin, and confused grief must be reduced to particulars. It is a principle in the mystery of Christ, resolved upon by the best divines, rightly instructed to the kingdom of heaven, "That a confused acknowledgment, and general repentance only, for known sins, is never sound and saving ; but only common, formal, perfunctory, and that of counterfeit converts, not truly touched with the sense of their sins, nor heartily resolved to forsake them." If they can be brought to the sight, sense, and acknowledgement of some one special notorious sin, which hath most reigned in their heart, or life ; and be in some good measure convinced, and terrified about the heinousness and horrible guilt of it, it may be a good means, by God's blessing, to bring in the rest. For ordinarily true repentance is first occasioned by some one special sin laid to heart. To further the work of a more particular setting their sins in order before their eyes ; it were an happy thing, if all the troubled souls we meet with, were furnished before hand with a competent speculative knowledge, at least of the particulars in God's law, exorbitant passages of their life, and gross corruptions of their hearts. We might so, by God's help, more easily bring them to particular remorse, and fit them sooner for comfort. But we find it a most hard task, to encounter the devil's devices, wiles, and depths, in a poor, distressed, tempted, ignorant person.

4. When the party is dejected for some notorious sin only. It is sometimes seen in mere civil men, that, having a long time preserved their reputations unstained from gross enormities ; after shaming themselves by some infamous fall, they seem to be much concerned, as though they were truly troubled with remorse ; whereas, perhaps, the present grief ariseth rather from loss of credit, than any wound of conscience, (though to favour their credit, they cunningly father it upon conscience.) Or, let them be indeed affrighted grievously for a time with the horror of that one sin ; yet stay the cry, and abate the rage of that one with some superficial comfort,

and they are healed, and put into an happy case in their own conceit, and in the opinion also of their unskilful physician; though they search no further into the loathsome dunghill of those many abominable corruptions in their hearts and lives, of which they are as full as the skin will hold. Now, it is a foul and fearful oversight in a minister,—nay, it may prove an error stained with spiritual bloodshed, to promise pardon to such partial penitents. Suppose a man, sick of a *pleurisy*, should send to a physician, and tell him he is sore troubled with a cough, and entreat his help, concealing other signs and symptoms, which ordinarily accompany that disease,—as his short and difficult breathing, and the stinging stitch in his side;—the physician may address himself to cure the cough, and yet the patient die of an inflammation. It is in some respects, so in the present point. A man may complain, and be concerned extremely for some one sin, and that may be well; but except he proceed to a further discovery, and sorrow proportionable for his other known sins, they will be the destruction of his soul. If a dozen thieves be entered into thy house, it is not enough for thee to lay hold of the captain only, and thrust him out. If thou suffer but one of them to lurk in any corner, he will serve the turn to cut thy throat. Crying out of *one* capital sin only is not sufficient; we must *confess and forsake* all, if we look to *find mercy*, Prov. xxviii. 13.

And yet, here I would have no true penitent mistake. The bare omission of some particular sins, in this case, is not damnable. For we must know, that if a man deal truly with his own heart, in a sincere acknowledgment and repentance for known sins, (and he ought to labour, by industrious inspection into God's pure law, to know as many as may be,) and for all those that come into his mind, when he sets himself apart solemnly to humble his soul before God; (and he ought to remember as many as he can possibly;) I say, if so, then, for secret and unknown sins, which are committed in weakness and ignorance, the Lord accepteth a general confession, as we

see in David's practice, Psal. xix. 12, "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from my secret faults." Sins there are which are not only unnoticed by others, but even unknown to a man's own self, which, notwithstanding, are clearly subject to the search of God's all-seeing eye. Sins there are also, which, even in the zealous exercise of repentance, may not be remembered by the true penitent; which, if he would recover into his memory, he would heartily bewail and detest; so unnumbered are the cursed by-paths of men. But I must say thus much for the comfort of the true convert; if he truly repent for all his unknown sins, and labour for further illumination of conscience, and fuller revelation of every corrupt disposition and practice in heart and life—and those sins of knowledge also, which came into his mind; if with diligence, and without dissimulation, with hearty prayer, and best intention of spirit, he endeavour to recover them into his memory, that he might also mourn for, and mortify them with the rest; carrying ever in his heart this resolution, that as any sin shall be discovered to his conscience, he will abominate and abandon it:—I say, both these kinds of sins (it is a pearl for the true penitent, let no stranger meddle with it,) to such an one, upon such conditions, are most certainly washed away by Christ's blood, and God's free mercy, upon his general confession and repentance.

Besides these two cases,—first, want of knowledge, and, secondly, want of remembrance in the sense I have said. There is also a third, and that is, want of time; which doth also sometimes excuse the omission of some particular sins; as we may see in the thief upon the cross. For want of leisure, he could not possibly punctually revise his vile, abominable life, nor peruse with remorse all the particulars of his former courses. But he had infused into his soul by Jesus Christ an habitual grace of true repentance; which, if he had lived, would, no doubt, have carried him faithfully over all the notorious passages of his life with a truly contrite, broken,

and bleeding soul. So that if he had had space, I doubt not but he would have proved a very eminent and exemplary *penitent*. And therefore the Lord, in mercy, did graciously accept the desire and purpose of his heart.

But to return to the point, and give my advice in the case proposed; let the party, who is so distressed for some notorious sin only, and there takes up his rest, be told, that though he dwell with deepest sighs upon some of his greatest sins, yet the rest must by no means be neglected. That which is most *crimson* must serve as a *crier*, if I may so speak, to summon the rest into the court of conscience, and as a *remembrancer* to bring them to mind. But when thou beginnest to reckon with thy conscience for some extraordinary rebellion, never cease until thou hast searched thoroughly, and ransacked it to the bottom, that it may smart soundly before thou hast done, with true remorse for all thy other sinful corruptions also. When horror for one sin hath seized upon thy heart, follow God's blessed hand leading thee to conversion, through the pangs of the new birth, by giving way to all the rest, to bring in their several indictments against thy soul. And be not afraid thus to arraign and condemn thyself, as guilty of innumerable sins, before God's just tribunal. For then shalt thou find a gracious Advocate at his right hand; whom, if thou seek in truth, he will, by the plea of his most precious blood, sue out a pardon for thine everlasting peace.

I confess that, commonly, true converts at first, and afterwards too, cry out most of some one capital sin, and that which in their days of darkness and vanity wasted their consciences most; but yet, should they be distressed never so much for that one,—if, besides, they did not, by the conduct of the blessed Spirit, descend also to a more particular confession and repentance of all other known sins, all were nothing. If we favour any *one* sin in our heart, or life, or calling, we cannot enjoy God's favour. If there be any secret corruption, which a man labours to

conceal, what hope can he have that it is covered with the blood of Christ from the wrath to come? In a true penitent, there ought to be an utter cessation from all gross sins, and at least disaffection from, and all possible opposition to, even unavoidable infirmities, and inseparable frailties of the flesh.

5. Fifthly, when the physician of the soul promiseth mercy and pardon, hand over head, without that spiritual discretion which is important in a matter of so great consequence, to a man upon his bed of death, who hath formerly been a mere stranger to the power of godliness, because now in the evil day he is concerned extremely, and thus bemoans himself: "Oh! I am an horrible and grievous sinner! If I were to live again, what would I not do? A world for comfort now, and to "die the death of the righteous." Because he "howls upon his bed," as the prophet speaketh, and breaks out oftentimes into a roaring complaint of sin, and cry for pardon, by reason he now begins to fear and feel the avenging hand of God ready to seize upon him for his former rebellions: or, when he assures him, having been a formal Christian only, of bliss and glory, because out of self-deceit, he cries, "Lord! Lord!" seems to by-standers very confident that he shall presently receive a crown of life; thanks God that nothing troubles him; professes to every one that comes to visit him that he believes and repents with all his heart, forgives all the world, and makes no doubt of heaven.

Here, by the way, we must take notice, that many, having "neglected so great salvation," and "judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life," all their life long, and now at length being overtaken, after a short gleam of prosperity, with the darkness of the evil day, may keep a stir upon their dying beds, or in some great extremity, with grievous complaints of their former sinful courses, with incessant cries for ease, being now caught, "like wild bulls, in a net full of the wrath of God;" and yet be not truly penitent, not soundly and savingly

humbled, not rightly fitted for Christ and comfort. Their earnestness in such a case is ordinarily like the tears, prayers, and cries of a condemned malefactor. He is very earnest with the judge to spare him. He seems to relent, and to be touched with remorse, but it is only because he is like to be hanged. Again, many there are who, satisfying themselves and others with a goodly shew of a "form of godliness," may, upon their last bed, discover a great deal of fearfulness about their spiritual state, and behave themselves as though they were most certainly going to everlasting bliss, when, as God knows, their answer at his just tribunal must be, "I know you not." They are so confident, not because they have escaped, but because they never saw their danger. And hence it is that many of them die with as much confidence as the best Christians. Now, concerning the present case, I must tell you, that, for my part, I would not much alter my judgment of a man's spiritual state, whom I have thoroughly known, for the manner of his death. The end of God's dearest servants, after an holy life and unblamable conversation, may not appear in the eye of man so comfortable as was expected, by reason of much tenderness of conscience, some strong temptation, spiritual desertion, violent distemper of body; or for some other secret and sacred end, seen good to Divine wisdom. On the other side, a notorious wretch, who hath swam down the current of the times, may seem to die penitently; and yet his sorrow be but such as the terrors of a guilty conscience produce; and his resolution to cast away his sins only such as a man hath in a storm to cast away his goods; not because he doth not love them; but because he feareth to lose his life if he part not with them. Or, a mere moral, or formal man, may upon his bed of death be very confident, and yet that confidence be no other than a strange imaginary conceit of a covetous man grasping a great deal of gold in his dream, but when he awaketh, behold his hands are empty.

For a more full and clear apprehension of the point, let

us take a survey of the different kinds of death which ordinarily befall the godly and the wicked. And first, of the death of God's children, which are divers : for,

1. Some of their holy and zealous lives determine and expire gloriously, even like a clear sun in a summer's evening. The painful pangs of death are sweetened with the beams of God's glorious presence, and their fast embracing of Jesus Christ in the arms of their faith. So that to them, the very joys of heaven mingle themselves with those last agonies. Their heads are, as it were, crowned with immortality, and endless peace upon their beds of death. Luther, that blessed man of God, died thus : "My heavenly Father," (said he at his death,) eternal and merciful God ! thou hast manifested unto me thy dear Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. I have taught him, I have known him, I love him as my life, my health, and my redemption ;—whom the wicked have persecuted, maligned, and with injury afflicted. Draw my soul to thee." After this, he said, thrice, "I commend my spirit into thine hands, thou hast redeemed me, O God of truth ! God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that all that believe in him should have life everlasting." Hear how that blessed saint of God, Mr. John Holland, ended his days. Having, the day before he died, continued his meditation and exposition upon Rom. viii. for the space of two hours, or more, on a sudden he said, "O stay your reading ! What brightness is this I see ? Have you lit up any candles ?" To which it was answered, "No ; it is the sun-shine ;" for it was about five o'clock, in a clear summer's evening. "Sun-shine ! (said he,) nay, my Saviour's-shine. Now, farewell world, welcome heaven ! the Day-Star from on high hath visited my heart. O speak it when I am gone, and preach it at my funeral, *God dealeth familiarly with man*. I feel his mercy, I see his Majesty, whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell ; God knoweth ; but I see things that are unutterable !" So, ravished in spirit, he roamed towards heaven with a cheerful look and soft,

sweet voice ; but what he said could not be conceived. With the sun, in the morning following, raising himself, as Jacob did upon his staff, he shut up his blessed life with these words : “ O what a happy change shall I make, from night to day ! from darkness to light ! from death to life ! from sorrow to solace ! from a factious world to an heavenly being ! O my dear brethren, sisters, and friends ! it pitieth me to leave you behind. Yet remember my death when I am gone, and what I now feel. I hope you shall find, ere you die, that God doth, and will deal familiarly with men. And now, thou fiery chariot, that camest down to fetch up Elijah, carry me to my happy hold. And all ye blessed angels, who attended the soul of Lazarus, to bring it up to heaven, bear me, oh ! bear me into the bosom of my best-beloved ! Amen, Amen. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly ! ” And so he fell asleep.

2. Others may end their days more uncomfortably, through the violence of their distemper. And yet, says one, “ As a man may die like a lamb, and go to hell ; so one dying in exceeding torments of the body may go to heaven.”

3. The death of some others is mixed with tempestuous storms, in the beginning of their last sickness, and a fair, refreshing, glorious calm towards the conclusion of their life. For some secret end and holy purpose, seeming good to his heavenly wisdom, God suffers sometimes even his dearest servants to taste, as it were, of the fire of hell, as a preparative to drink more sweetly of the well of life.

4. Some of God’s worthiest champions, and most zealous servants, do not answer the irreprovable sanctity of their life with those proportionable extraordinary comforts upon their beds of death which might be expected. So infinitely unfathomable, by all created understandings, are the depths of God’s most holy ways, and his inscrutable counsels ; quite contrary, many times, to the conclusions of man’s best wisdom. But every one of his, since he passes through those pangs into joys endless

and unspeakable, must be content to glorify God, and to be serviceable to his secret ends, with what kind of death he pleases; whether it be glorious and free from temptation, or uncomfortable, because of bodily distempers; or mingled with temptations and triumphs; or ordinary, and without any great shew, after extraordinary singularities of an holy life, which promised an end of special note and admiration.

Let us now take a survey of the death of the wicked, and those who were always strangers to the mystery of godliness, which are various also: for, 1, some die desperately. Though thousands perish by presumption, to one of these who despair; yet some there are to whom, upon their beds of death, all their sins are *set in order* before them, and represented to the eye of their awakened consciences so terribly, that, at the very first sight, they are struck stark dead in soul and spirit, utterly overwhelmed and quite swallowed up with guilty and desperate horror.

2. Others die senselessly. They demean themselves upon their dying beds as though there were no immortality of the soul; no tribunal above; no account to be given for all things done in the flesh; no everlasting estate in the world to come, wherein every one must either lie in unspeakable pains, or live in unutterable pleasures. They are neither afflicted with any fear of hell, nor affected with any hope of heaven. They are unapprehensive of their danger, and fearless of the fiery lake into which they are ready to fall. In these regards they are utterly untouched, die most quietly, and without any trouble at all. And it is their ordinary answer, when they are questioned about their spiritual state, "I thank God, nothing troubles me." Thus these men, as one speaks, "live like stocks, and die like blocks. And yet the ignorant people (saith Mr. Greenham,) commend such fearful deaths, saying, He departed as meekly as a lamb; when they might as well say, He died like a beast, and perished like an ox."

3. Others die formally; I mean, they make goodly

shews of much confidence and comfort. The spirit of delusion and self-cozenage continuing their groundless presumption in its heighth and strength unto the end. Of all the four kinds of death, which ordinarily befall such as are not saved, this is the fairest in shew ; but yet of greatest imposture to those about them, and of most pestilent consequence to harden all of the same humour.

4. Some die penitently ; I mean in outward appearance. Many, having served their appetites all their lives, now, when the sun of all their sensual delights begins to set, would very gladly be saved. Because “distress and anguish is come upon them,” they inquire after God, and would now be gladly acquainted with him. They promise very fair what mended men they will be, if the Lord restore them. But all these goodly promises are but “as a morning cloud,” and “as the early dew.” It is true, that true repentance is never too late, but late repentance is seldom true. For here our sins rather leave us than we them, (as Ambrose says,) and as he adds, “Woe be unto them whose sin and life end together.”

Now since upon this perusal of the different deaths incident to the godly and the wicked, it appears, that some men, never soundly converted, may, in respect of all outward representations, die as confidently and comfortably, in the opinion of most men, as God’s dearest children ; and that Christ’s servants sometimes may depart this life uncomfortably to the eye ; I say, these things being so, I hold my conclusion still,—not much to alter my judgment of a man’s spiritual state for the manner of his death. I except the *thief upon the cross*. My meaning is, that there may be some (I know not how few,) who may at last, being very extraordinarily humbled under God’s mighty hand, and cleaving to the Lord Jesus with truly broken hearts, follow by a miracle, the thief upon the cross to an everlasting crown. And here now I require the care, the conscience, heavenly wisdom, expe-

rimental skill, and all his ministerial dexterity, in the physician of the soul, to discern aright between these and seeming penitents ; and then to apply himself proportionably with all holy discretion to their several different estates.

III. A third error is, when the spiritual physician pours the oil of comfort into a wounded conscience too soon. The surgeon that heals up a dangerous sore, and draws a skin over it, before his corrosives have consumed the dead flesh, before he hath opened it, ransacked it to the root, and rent out the core, is so far from profiting, that he procures a deal of misery to his patient. For the rotten matter that remains behind will in the mean time fester underneath, and at length break out again, perhaps, both with more extremity of anguish, and difficulty of cure. They are but *mountebanks*, smatterers in physic and surgery. Upon the whole of the matter, but plain cheats and cozeners, who are so ready for extemporary cures. Sudden recoveries from old distempers are very seldom sound. If it be thus in bodily cures, what a deal of extraordinary discretion, heavenly wisdom, punctual weighing of circumstances, both speculative and experimental skill, heartiest ejaculations, wrestlings with God by prayer for a blessing, is very needful, for a true and right method in healing a wounded conscience? which doth pass immeasurably all other maladies, both in exquisiteness of pain, tenderness of touch, deceitfulness of depth, and in highest and greatest consequence, either for the everlasting health, or endless horror of an immortal soul.

Hence it was that that learned doctor in this heavenly mystery, Mr. Greenham, did so far differ from all daubers with untempered mortar. Treating of matters of this sort, he says, "I shall seem very strange in my cure ; and so much the more be wondered at, by how much, in manner of proceeding, I differ from the most sort of men herein. I am not ignorant that many visiting afflicted consciences, cry still, 'O comfort them ! O speak joyful things unto them !' Yea, there be some, and those of the

most learned, who in such cases are full of these and such like speeches, ‘Why are you so heavy, my brother? Be of good cheer. What is there that you should fear? God is merciful, Christ is a Saviour.’ These be speeches of love indeed; but they often do the poor souls as much good herein as if they should pour cold water into their bosoms; when, as without further searching of their sores, they may as well minister a malady as a medicine. For as cordial medicines are not good for every sick person, especially when the body needeth rather a strong purgation than restorative, so the comfortable applying God’s promises are not so profitable for every one that is humbled; especially when their souls are rather further to be cast down, than as yet to be raised up. Comfort seemeth to cure for a while; but, for want of wisdom in the right discerning of the cause, men minister one medicine for another; and so, for want of skill, the latter fit grindeth sorer than the former.”

So Calvin: “Let this be the first degree of repentance, when men feel that they have been grievous offenders:—and then the grief is not to be immediately cured; as impostors deal *flatteringly* and *nicely* with men’s consciences, that they may favour themselves as much as may be, and are notably deceived with *superficial daubing*. The physician will not forthwith assuage the pain, but will consider what may be more expedient. Perhaps he will increase it, because a sharper purge will be necessary. Even so the prophets of God, when they see trembling consciences, do not presently apply sweet consolations; but rather tell them that they must not dally with God; and stir up those who are so forward of their own accord, that they would propose unto themselves the terrible judgment of God, that they may yet be more and more humbled.”

Mr. Rogers, another excellent and skilful workman in the great mystery of saving souls, tells us truly, “that the promise of salvation is not straight belonging to one terrified in conscience; but to one that is not only terrified

for his punishment, but contrite for sin. Let not these be weary of the yoke of God and the law, and make overmuch haste out of this state, for so may they undo themselves. For some, notwithstanding their terror, have withstood their salvation; even as an impatient patient gets the surgeon to pull off the corrosive, or pulls it off himself, as soon as it begins to smart a little, and so thinks it is searched enough, and now lays on healing plasters; but afterwards it breaks out again worse than ever. Whereas, if the corrosive had been let lie on till it had eaten out the corruption indeed, then it might have been whole long ago."

If daubers in this kind, had ever had any experimental feeling in their own souls of Christ's rule and the Holy Ghost's method, which is, first, *to convince of sin*; to deject and humble in the sight of the Lord, with apprehension and sense of a most abominable and cursed state, before there follow a conviction of the *righteousness of Christ* to raise up; or of the necessity of the work of the *spirit of bondage* to prepare for Christ and comfort; they would not deal so ignorantly in a matter of so dear and everlasting importance. They would not so hastily, without all warrant and wisdom, without any further search, discovery, or dejection, offer mercy, pardon, and all the promises to a man formerly wicked, only for some faint and enforced confession of sins; but would labour to let the spirit of bondage have its full work, and lay him open more at large in the true colours of his scarlet sins; and not only produce a bare confession of them, but such a conviction, which may stop his mouth, that he hath not a word to speak. Oh! how often have I heard many a poor ignorant soul, in the day of sorrow, being moved to "humble himself in the sight of the Lord," that he might lift him up; first, to get his heart broken with the abhorred burden of all his sins, and then to bring it thus bleeding to the throne of grace, that Christ might bind it up; I say, being thus intreated, how oft have I heard them answer, "Yes, yes, with all my

heart: I am sorry for my sins with all my heart. I trust in Jesus Christ with all my heart." And thus whatsoever you can advise, he does it with all his heart. Whereas, alas! as yet, his understanding is as dark as darkness itself, in respect of any, (I say, not only,) saving knowledge, but almost of any knowledge at all; and his heart, in respect of any true remorse, as hard as a rock of stone.

But hence it may be, some troubled soul may say, "Alas, if it be thus, what shall I think of myself? I do not remember, that ever I tasted so deeply of such terrors. I have not had such experience of the *spirit of bondage*, and therefore I am in doubt about the truth and soundness of my conversion." I answer: in this case of legal terrors and humiliations, we do not prescribe just such a measure. We do not determine upon such and such a degree; we leave that to the wisdom of the only wise God. But sure we are, a man must have so much as to bring him to Christ. It must make him *weary* of all his sins; willing to "pluck out his right eye," and "cut off his right hand;" I mean, to part with his bosom sins; to *sell all*, and not leave so much as an *hoof behind*. It must necessarily be so much, as to make him see his danger, and so haste to the *city of refuge*; to be sensible of his spiritual misery, that he may heartily thirst for mercy; to find himself lost and cast away in himself, that Christ may be all in all unto him. And after must follow an hatred of all evil ways; a thorough change of former courses, company, conversation; and setting himself in the way and practice of *sobriety, honesty, and holiness*. If thou hast had experience of these effects in thy soul, whatsoever measure of the *spirit of bondage* hath been in thee, thou art safe enough, and mayest go on comfortably in the *holy path*, without any discouragement.

These things premised, I come to tell you, that for the rectifying of that fore-mentioned error, and prevention of the danger of daubing and undoing for ever, I would

advise the spiritual physician, to labour with the utmost of his skill, best experience, heartiest prayers, and most piercing persuasions, watchfully to observe the season, when he may, upon good ground, apply unto the wounded soul assured comfort in the promises of life, and that sovereign blood, which was spilt for broken hearts ; and assure him, that all those rich compassions, which lie within the compass of that great covenant of everlasting mercy, sealed with the painful sufferings of the Son of God, belong unto him. Which is then, when his heart is soundly humbled under God's mighty hand, and brought at length to, First, A truly penitent sight, sense, and hatred of all sin : Secondly, A sincere and insatiable thirst after Jesus Christ, and his righteousness, both imputed and inherent : Thirdly, An unfeigned and unreserved resolution of an universal new obedience.

In the mean time, before such fitness be fully effected, I would have the man of God address his patient with his best persuasions and proofs, (seasonably mingled with motives to humiliation,) on the pardonableness of his sins, possibility of pardon, damnableness of despair, danger of ease by outward mirth ; and to hold out, as a prize and lure, as it were, the freeness of God's immeasurable mercy, the general offer of Jesus Christ, without any exception of persons, times, or sins ; the preciousness and infallibility of the promises, in as fair and lovely a fashion as he can possibly. But it is one thing to say, " If these things be so, I can assure you of the promises of life, and your real interest in all the riches of God's grace, and glorious purchase of Christ's meritorious blood ;" and another thing to say, " If you will suffer your understandings to be enlightened, your consciences to be convinced, your hearts to be wounded with the sight, sense, and horror of sin ; if you will come in, and take Jesus Christ, his person, his passion, his yoke ; if you will entertain these and these affections, longings, and resolutions, then most certainly our merciful Lord

will crown your souls with his dearest compassions and freest love."

Lastly. That when all is done, when the men of God have their desire; that the patient, in their persuasion, is soundly wrought upon, and professeth, as they verily think, from his heart; 1. That he is *heavy laden* with the grievous burden of all his sins; 2. That he is come to that resolution, *to do any thing*; which we find in the hearers of John and Peter, Luke iii. Acts ii. 3. That he prizeth Christ far above the riches, pleasures, and glory of the whole earth; thirsts and longs for him infinitely. 4. That he is most willing to *sell all*; to part with all sin, with his *right eye* and *right hand*. 5. That he is content with all his heart to take Christ, as well for a Lord and Husband, to serve, love, and obey him, as for a Saviour to deliver him from the miseries of sin; to associate himself to that sect, which is so "spoken against every where:" I say, when it is thus with the afflicted party, (and most happy is he, when it is thus with him,) yet, notwithstanding, because God alone is the "Searcher of the heart;" and "the heart of man is deceitful above all things;" we can assure mercy and pardon only conditionally. We must ever add, either expressedly, or impliedly, "If all this which you profess be in truth; if you be thus resolved indeed; then you may sweetly repose your soul upon Jesus Christ, as your "Wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption;" upon all the promises of life, and God's free grace, as truly belonging unto you."

But even then there are counsels and caveats, which the faithful physician of the soul, according to occasions, circumstances, and present exigents, may think fit to be mingled with administration of mercy, and wisely propounded to the afflicted party. It may not prove unseasonable to speak thus, or in some such manner, to thy spiritual patient. 1. If these things be truly so; if thou feel indeed such a melting spirit, such broken and

Bleeding affections, thou art blessed. If that sorrowful soul of thine doth renounce from the very heart, with utter detestation, all manner of sin; insatiably thirst *after righteousness*; unfeignedly resolve, for the time to come, to bend itself towards heaven in all new obedience; I say, if this be sincerely the disposition of thine heart, thou art truly happy. Only take notice, (lest my ministering of mercy be mistaken,) that the "heart of man is deceitful above all things." A bottomless depth it is of falsehoods, dissemblings, hypocrisies. An endless maze of windings, turnings, and hidden passages. No eye can search and see its centre, but that all-seeing one alone, which is *ten thousand times brighter than the sun*; and therefore, not I, nor any man alive, can promise pardon, but upon supposition; "If these things be so." And the sincerity of thy heart, and truth of these protestations, will appear, when this dismal tempest, which hath overcast and shaken thy spirit with fear and astonishment, is over-blown. Thy course of life to come will prove a true touch-stone, to try, whether this be the kindly travail of the new birth. If, when thy soul shall recover calmness and quiet, thou turn unto thine old company and conversation; it will then be manifest, that this furnace of terror and temptation was so far from working thine heart to heavenly-mindedness, that it hath hammered it to more hardness; so far from purging and refining, that it hath occasioned more earthliness and sensuality therein. But if, when thou art raised by God's merciful hand, out of the depth of this spiritual distress, thou express thy hatred against sin, by an earnest opposition, watchfulness, and striving against all, especially that, which before stuck closest to thy bosom; by thine hunger and thirst after a comfortable fruition of God; by a constant pursuit, and exercise of all means and opportunities of all his blessed ordinances, appointed for growth in grace, and bringing us nearer unto him; and by attending, with thy best endeavours, and utmost ability, to those three glorious works of Christianity:

1. Preservation of purity in thine own soul and body :
2. Righteous dealing with all thou hast to do with :
3. Holy carriage towards God in all religious duties ;—I say, if upon thy recovery, this be thy course, such behaviour will infallibly evidence thy happy translation from death to life, from the vanity and folly of sin, into the light and liberty of God's children.

2. Say unto him, "When once that blessed fountain of saving blood is opened upon thy soul, in the side of the Son of God, by the hand of faith, then also must a counter-spring of repentant tears be opened in thine humbled heart, which must not be dried up until thy dying day." This is my meaning ; (for every Christian hath not tears at command : the heart sometimes may bleed, when the eyes are dry.) Thou must be content to continue the current of thy godly sorrow upon those infirmities, defects, relapses, backslidings, which may accompany thy regenerate state, even until that body of sin be dissolved. As concerning thine old sins, it is not enough that now the horror of them has wrought upon thy heart some softness and remorse : but thou must many a time hereafter, in the extraordinary exercises of renewed repentance, press thy penitent spirit to bleed afresh within thee, and *draw water* again out of the bottom of thy broken heart, with those Israelites, "and pour it out before the Lord," for thy never sufficiently sorrowed-for abominations, against so blessed and bountiful a God.

Now, the solemn times and occasions, when we are called to this renewed repentance, are such as these :
1. When we are to perform some special services unto God ; because then out of a godly jealousy we may fear, lest the light of his countenance may not lie so open unto us, by reason of the interposition of our former sins. 2. When we seek for any special blessing at God's hand ; because then out of a gracious fear we may suspect that our old sins may intercept the sweet and comfortable influences of the throne of grace. 3. In the time of some great affliction, when upon a new search,

and strict examination of our hearts and lives, we humble ourselves again in the sight of the Lord, and mourn afresh over him, whom we have pierced with our youthful pollutions. 4. After a relapse into some old secret lust, or fall into some new sin. 5. Above all, upon those mighty days of humiliation by prayer and fasting, publick or private, wherein God's people wrestle with God by the omnipotence of prayer, and work so many wonders from time to time. 6. Some there are also, who, setting apart some special times to confer with God in secret, lay together before him, the glorious catalogue of the riches of his mercy, all his favours, preservations, deliverances, from their first being, to that time; and the abhorred catalogue of all their sins from Adam to that very hour, original, both imputed and inherent; actual, both before and since their calling: a serious comparing of which two together, makes sin more loathsome, and the mercies of God more illustrious; and so proves effectual many times to soften men's hearts, and fills their souls with much joyful sorrow, and humble thankfulness. Upon such occasions as these, when thou art called to a more solemn and severe review of thy old sins, thou must renew this present repentance of thy new birth, and make thine heart break again. And so often also, as thou lookest back upon them, thou must labour to abominate them, with more resolute aversion. Though it may be, by the mercies of God, they shall never be able to sting thee again with guilty horror; yet thou must still endeavour to strangle utterly thy former delight in them, with more hearty additions of deadly hatred; and to be more humbled for them until thy ending hour. It is a very high happiness to be able to look back upon the choicest youthful pleasures and pollutions, without either sensual delight, or slavish horror; with sincere hatred, holy indignation, and hearty mourning.

Also, for those sins, which thy fallen nature imperfectly renewed, and the violence of temptation may possibly hereafter cause thee to commit; if thy heart be now

touched, thou shalt find much necessity of continuing thy repentance, so long as thy life lasts. A ruinous house must be still in repairing. These bodies of death are naturally liable to so many breaches, by the assaults of original sin, and other implacable enemies, that there is need of perpetual watch and ward, repenting and repairing. When thou art in company, solitary, busied about thy particular calling, there may suddenly arise in thine heart, some vain, unclean, revengeful thought; in such a case, ejaculate presently a penitent sigh, and fervent prayer for pardon. In thy family, perhaps amongst thy children and servants, by reason of some cross accident, thou mayest break out into some unadvised speech; not without danger of hurting those about thee; get thee presently into thy closet, throw thyself down with a truly grieved and humbled soul, before the throne of grace, and rise not until thou be reconciled unto thy God. If at any time, (which God forbid,) thou be overtaken with some more publick sin, or dangerously haunted with some secret lust; appoint for thyself a solemn day of humiliation; and then cry unto the Lord, “like a woman in travail;” and give him no rest until he return unto thee with the wonted favour of his countenance. If Christians would constantly attend to this blessed business of immediately rising by repentance, after every relapse, they would soon find a further pleasure in the ways of God, than they ever yet tasted. This course continued, would help excellently, by the blessing of God, to keep in their bosoms that, which they much desire, and often bewail, the want of a cheerful, bold, and heavenly spirit.

Neither let any be troubled, because I press the exercise both of renewed and continued repentance all our life; as though thereupon the Christian’s life might seem uncomfortable. For sorrow according to God, evangelical mourning, is mingled with abundance of spiritual joy, which doth infinitely surpass in sweetness, all worldly pleasures and delights of sense. Nay, whereas

the mirth of carnal men is but a flash of hellish folly ; this is a very glimpse of heavenly glory. Let me tell you again, how sweetly and truly an excellent divine speaks of it, "There is," saith he, "more lightness of heart, and true delight in the sorrow of the saints, than in the world's loudest laughter : for unspeakable joy is mingled with unutterable groans." The ancient fathers are of the same mind : "Godly sorrow," saith Chrysostom, "is better than the joy of the world. Even as the joy of the world is ever accompanied with sorrow ; so tears, according to God, beget continual delight." Again, "such a man as this now," (meaning him whose heart is inflamed with heavenly love,) "despising all things here below, doth persevere in continual compunction, pouring out abundance of tears every day, and taking thence a great deal of pleasure." "Let the repentant," saith Austin, "be always sorrowful for sin, and always rejoice for that sorrow."

But here thou must beware of two dangerous errors, 1. Either to conceive that a man may not admit of any comfort, because he still finds in himself more matter of mourning and humiliation. 2. Or to think, when he hath once laid hold on Christ, that then he must mourn no more. 1. For the first, know, that were our heads seas, and our eyes fountains of tears ; should our hearts fall asunder into drops of blood, through indignation against ourselves for our transgressions ; yet should we come infinitely short of the sorrow, which our many and heinous sins require. Therefore we cannot expect any such sorrow, or weeping for our sins, as thereby to win God's favour. Such a conceit were most absurd, senseless, and sinful, and would rather discover pride, than true humility. Had we a thousand eyes, it were too little to weep them all out, for the very vanity of that one sinful thought. Had we a thousand hearts, and they should all burst with penitent grief, it were immeasurably, inconceivably insufficient. For were all this so, yet it would not be this, but the heart's blood

of Jesus Christ, that could make the Father's heart to yearn over us. Whoever, therefore, has to deal with a poor troubled soul, sorely crushed, under the burden of his sins, endlessly pleading against himself, out of a strong apprehension of his own vileness and unworthiness, putting off all comfort by his misconceit, that no seas of sorrow will serve the turn to come comfortably unto Jesus Christ; let him press upon such a one this true principle: "So soon as a man is heartily humbled for all his sins, and weary of their weight, though the degree of his sorrow be not answerable to his desires, yet he shall most certainly be welcome unto Jesus Christ." It is not so much the measure of our sorrow, as the truth thereof, which fits us for the promises of mercy. Though I must say this also, "He that thinks he hath sorrowed enough for his sins, never sorrowed savingly."

2. For the second, take notice, that the blood of Christ, savingly applied to thine humbled soul, must, by no means dry up thy well-spring of weeping, but only assuage and heal thy fear. That precious balm hath this heavenly property and power, that it rather melts, softeneth, and makes the heart a great deal more ripe for weeping. If these be truly the pangs of the new birth, thou shalt find, that thy cleaving with assurance unto the Lord Jesus, will not so much cause thy sorrow to cease, as season and sweeten it. If thou cast thine eye, with a believing heart upon him, whom thou hast pierced with thy sins, (and those sins are said properly to have pierced Christ, which at length are pardoned by his blood,) thou canst not possibly contain, but love unto thy crucified Lord, and a sense of God's mercy, will make thee weep again, and force thine heart to burst out abundantly into fresh and filial tears. As David's heart bled afresh with repentant sorrow, upon his assurance by Nathan of the pardon of his sin, Psalm li.; so thou canst not choose, but mourn more heartily and evangelically, in such a manner, as shall sweetly perpetuate the spring of thy godly sorrow.

Take, therefore, special heed of these two depths of the devil, that I have now disclosed unto thee; and with regard to thy soul, pursue the following method. First, on the one hand; when thou art truly wrought upon by the ministry of the word, *believe the prophets*; those *ones of a thousand*, learned in the right handling of afflicted consciences, *and thou shalt prosper*. As soon as thy soul is soundly humbled for sin, open it joyfully like the thirsty ground, that the refreshing dew of the gospel may drop and distil upon it, as the small rain upon the parched grass. Otherwise, 1. Thou offerest dishonour to the tenderness of God's mercy; who is ever infinitely ready to bind up a broken heart. Consider the parable of the prodigal son, Luke xv. He is said to *go*, but the father to *run*. 2. Thou mayest, by thy heavy heart, unnecessarily disable thyself for the duties of thy calling. 3. Thou art extremely cruel to thine own soul. For whereas it might now be filled with *unspeakable joy*; with "peace that passeth all understanding;" with evangelical pleasures, such as "neither eye hath seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man;" by taking Christ; yet for all this, thou standest out, forsakest thine own comfort, and liest still upon the rack of doubt and fear.

Secondly, on the other hand: when the anguish of thy guilty conscience is allayed and supplied with the oil of comfort; thou must not either shut up thine eyes from further search into thy sins, or dry them up from any more mourning. But comfort of remission must serve as a precious eye-salve, both to clear their sight, that they may see more, and with more detestation; and to enlarge their sluices, as it were, to pour out repentant tears more plentifully. Thou must still dive into that body of death thou bearest about thee, for the finding out as much matter of sound humiliation as may be; that thou mayest still grow viler and viler in thine own eyes, and be more and more humbled until thy dying

day. But yet so, that, as thou holdest out in the one hand the clear crystal of God's pure law to discover the vileness and variety of thy sins; so thou hold out in the other hand, the Lord Jesus, hanging, bleeding, and dying upon the cross for thy sake. The one is sovereign, to save from slavish stings of conscience; the other mingled with faith, will serve as a quickening preparative to keep in thy bosom a soft, and lowly spirit; which doth ever excellently fit, to live by faith more cheerfully, to enjoy God more nearly, to apply Jesus Christ more feelingly, and to long for his coming more earnestly. In a word, to climb up those stairs of joy, which are pressed upon us by the holy prophet, Psalm xxxii. "Be glad—Rejoice—and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart."

Observe here, that hypocrisy may lurk in very goodly outward forms, and fair protestations of earnest humiliation. I mean not only *gross hypocrisy*, whereby men deceive others; but *formal hypocrisy*, whereby men deceive themselves. For I make no question, but the promises of amendment, which many make, when they are panting under some heavy cross, or grievous sickness, proceed from their hearts; I mean, they speak as they think; and, for the present, purpose performance; who, notwithstanding, upon their recovery, "return with the dog unto the vomit." I mention this point, not to trouble any true converts about the truth of their hearts in their troubles of conscience; for their prizing and cleaving to the Lord Jesus, heartily and steadily; and their present new obedience make it evident, that they have been savingly melted in the furnace of their spiritual afflictions. But to terrify those miserable men, who, having tasted the torture of a wounded conscience, dare upon any terms look back, and again commit those sins, which have already stung their hearts with the very terrors of hell: or rather, at this time, to teach the afflicted in conscience, that, when the rich treasures of God's free mercy, and "the unsearchable riches of

Christ'' are opened, he may not drink indiscreetly, as to fall into a surfeit of security. But to prevent miscarriage, in a matter of so invaluable moment, let him rather mingle motives to humiliation with his medicine of mercy. Let him fear and attend his own deceitful heart, with a narrow watch, and a very jealous eye. Otherwise that false heart may prove a depth, to drown his soul in the pit of endless perdition. For in time of extremity, especially of conscience, it may seem pliable, and promise fair; and yet when it comes to perform, either impudently wallows again in open wickedness, or rests only in a *form of godliness*.

Since thou art now turning unto God, and giving up thy name unto Christ, consider seriously what thou undertakest, and think deliberately beforehand, what it is like to cost thee. Thou must lay thy account with becoming *the drunkard's song*, and having *those that sit in the gate to speak against thee*; the vilest of men railing upon thee, and the wisest of the world laughing at thee. Thou must be content to live a despised man, to be scoffed at, to "be hated of all men;" to "crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts;" to look upon the world, set out in the gaudiest manner, with all her baits of riches, honours, pleasures, as upon an unsavoury, rotten carrion. Thou and the world must be as two dead carcasses upon one bier, without any mutual commerce, or intercourse; strangers and stark dead one unto another. For keeping a good conscience thou must deny thyself, thy worldly wisdom, carnal reason, corrupt affections; thy acceptation with the world, credit and applause; thy passions, profit, pleasures, possibility of growing great; thy nearest friends, ease, liberty, life itself. Thou must resolve upon this, or thou wilt never be able to hold out in thy spiritual building, or conquer in the Christian warfare.

Many professors have been affrighted with this counsel of leaving all for Christ, and, proving cowards, have turned back; but be not thou disheartened: for thou

shalt be no loser, but a great gainer thereby. Besides “eternal life in the world to come,” thou shalt “receive an hundred fold now in this time,” as Christ himself tells thee, Mark x. 30. If thou part with worldly joys, thou shalt have quiet in the Holy Ghost, spiritual joy, unspeakable and glorious, nearer familiarity with God, dearer communion with Jesus Christ. To which the pleasures of ten thousand worlds were but pain. If thou lose thine husband; he that made thee will be in his stead. “Thy Maker is thine husband, the Lord of Hosts is his name.” If thou lose thy father; the all-sufficient Jehovah, blessed for ever, will pity thee, “as a father pitieth his children.” If thou lose thy friends, thou shalt have the excellent upon earth to love thee dearly, and pray heartily for thee. In a word, if thou lose all for Christ’s sake, he will be unto thee *all in all*. And in him all things shall be thine in a far more sweet and eminent manner. “All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours, and ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.”

Now, when the spiritual physician shall see the soil of his patient’s heart well softened with sorrow for sin, comfortably warmed with refreshing beams of favour from the face of Christ, and so seasonably fitted to enter a Christian course, and to “bring forth fruits meet for repentance;” let him throw in timely seeds of zeal, undaunted courage, and unshaken resolution about the affairs of heaven; that it may be preserved free from the rank and flourishing, but fruitless, weed of formality and lukewarmness. Which pestilent canker, if it once take root in the heart, will never suffer the flowers of saving grace to grow by it. For as a loathsome vomit is to the stomach of him that casts it out; so are lukewarm professors to the Lord Jesus, Rev. iii. 16. I marvel many times what such men mean, thus to use the mighty Lord of heaven and earth. He offers to us in the ministry his own blessed Son, to be our dear and everlasting

husband ; his person, with all the royal endowments thereof, to be enjoyed through all eternity. Do you think it then likely, that he will accept at our hands an heartless, formal, outward service ; a cold, rotten carcase of religion ? That we should serve ourselves in the first place, and him in the second ? That we should spend the flower of our loves, joys, and services, upon some abominable bosom sin, and give the everlasting God only some outward religious forms ? And those also so far only, as they hurt not our temporal happiness, but may consist with the entire enjoyment of some inordinate lust, pleasure, profit, or preferment ? My counsel therefore is, when the spiritual patient hath passed the tempestuous sea of a troubled conscience, and is now taking a new course, that by all means he take heed not to split upon this rock.

IV. Though it be an ordinary, yet it is a dangerous error to conceive, that all is ended, when the afflicted party is mended ; and hath received ease and enlargement from the terrible pressures of his troubled conscience. If upon recovery out of trouble, there follow not a continued exercise of repentance ; an universal change in every faculty of soul, and in every disposition, word, and action ; an hatred and opposition to all sin ; a delight in the Word, ways, sabbaths, and saints of God ; a constant endeavour to make good the promises made in time of distress ; in a word, if there follow not a new life ; *if all things do not become new*, all is to no purpose in the point of salvation. They are then miserable comforters, physicians of no value, who think if they can any ways still the cries of a guilty conscience, they have done a worthy work ; though after their daubing, there be nothing left behind, but a senseless scar. I fear many poor souls are fearfully deluded, who being recovered out of terrors of conscience too suddenly, unseasonably, or one way or other unsoundly, conceive presently, they are truly converted ; though afterward they are the very same men

they were before ; or at best, bless themselves in the seeming happiness of an half conversion.

For a more full discovery of this mischief, let me acquaint you with four or five passages out of pangs of conscience, which still lead a man amiss ; and for all the smart of a wounded spirit, drown him in the works of darkness, and ways of death. 1. Some, when by the piercing power of the law, their consciences are pressed with the intolerable weight of their sins, with unspeakable rage and horror, fall into the most abhorred, and irrecoverable dungeon of despair. The flames of eternal fire seize upon them, even in this life ; they are in hell upon earth, and damned, as it were, above ground. 2. Others there are, who finding their sins discovered, and their consciences wounded by the Word ; and now feeling sadness, terrors, perplexity, and anxiety of spirit coming upon them, have speedy recourse to outward mirth, carnal contentments, and such other miserable comforters. They suppose, that these pangs that are now upon them, are nothing but fits of melancholy, or unseasonable effects of some *puritanical ministry*, and dangerous temptations to despair. And therefore they get out of them as fast as they can, by posting after worldly pleasures, company, visits, and entertainments. Thus I know not, whether with more sin or folly, they endeavour to come to themselves again by means, wherein they are not unlike the bloody Israelites ; who, while they burnt their children in sacrifice to Moloch, filled their ears with the noise of instruments, lest by the cries of their babes, they should be moved to pity. So these men of pleasure and perdition, seek to stop the guilty clamours of their vexed consciences with the comforts of this life and sensual joy, while their souls are sacrificing to satan, lest by listening to their cries, they should be stirred up to take compassion on their own immortal souls. But alas ! though earthly pleasures may give ease for the present, assuredly they will afterwards kindle such a fire in the

bowels of these miserable men, that will burn even to the bottom of hell. He that goes about to cure the wound of his conscience with sensual delight, is as if, to help the tooth-ache, he should knock out his brains; as if in extremity of thirst, he should drink rank poison to quench it; or prop up his falling roof with burning fire-brands.

I know full well, satan doth much applaud this pestilent course of theirs; and therefore he helps forward this accursed business all he can, of banishing trouble for sin with worldly toys. And ordinarily he proceeds thus: 1. In the first place, he labours to detain men in such a degree of hard-heartedness, that they shall not be moved at all with the ministry, or suffer the sword of the Spirit to pierce. And then, like *a strong man armed*, he possesseth their bodies and souls, which are his *palace*, with much peace; and employs them wholly in any hellish service at his pleasure. Thus he prevails with a world of men amongst us. They hear sermon after sermon, and yet are no more stirred, than the very seats whereon they sit, or the pillars whereon they lean.

2. But if it fall out so by God's blessing, that the Word once begins to enter within a man, and to work terror and trouble of mind for sin; so that he sees him grow sensible of his slavery, and like enough to break the prison, and escape, then doth he seriously observe which way the party inclines, and how he may be most easily diverted. First, if he find him to have been an horrible sinner, of a sad disposition, or much afflicted with outward crosses; he then lays a load of dejection and distress upon his affrighted soul, that, if it be possible, he may drive him to despair. But if, secondly, he perceive him not to have been guilty of any notorious sins, and to be of a cheerful constitution, and that he is striving to disentangle himself out of these terrors, and to enjoy his former delights and companions, then he is ready to follow and feed his humour this way; that so he may stifle

the work of the spirit of 'bondage in the very beginning. And to this end he blunts, with all the cunning he can, the sting of a man's conscience, and quite removes his own. He procures and offers all occasions of outward satisfaction. He furnishes his fellows in iniquity with pernicious eloquence, and store of enticements, to bring him back to their courses. He ministers his own delicious potions of carnal pleasure, to cast his conscience asleep again. In brief, he leaves no practice unessayed, to make the power of the law unprofitable unto him. And thus the wretched man, flying to human helps, to worldly wisdom, to mirth, good-fellowship, company, riches, pastimes; nay, even to drinking, dancing, masking, revelling, roaring, and other such raging fooleries, gets rid of those pangs of conscience, which began to interrupt his quiet.

3. Some there are, who pass out of trouble of mind for sin, into a kind of artificial and counterfeit peace of conscience. I mean thus; when a man, wounded by the power of the Word, but weary of the wound, impatient of spiritual heaviness, obstinately set against the holy severities of repentance, mortification, and walking with God; and withal meeting with some wretched dauber with untempered mortar, who is very ready to heal his heart with sweet words, "saying, peace, peace, when there is no peace;" snatches hold of comfort, and applies the promises of mercy and salvation, before they belong unto him; before he be searched to the quick, sounded to the bottom, and thoroughly humbled; before the spirit of bondage hath had its perfect work, and he is truly fitted for Jesus Christ.

These usually lay hold on some such text as this: "Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," Matt. xi. 28. Yea, but they are not weary of their sins, but only troubled with the present terror; nor willing to take upon them the yoke of Christ. Well enough content they are to take him as a Saviour to preserve them from hell, but not as a Lord,

a king, and an husband, to serve, obey, and love him. Again, they make this Scripture their strong hold : “ Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved,” Rom. x. 13. Yea, but they do not consider, that many also shall cry, Lord ! Lord ! and yet be excluded from eternal bliss ; and therefore all *that call* savingly *upon the name of Christ*, must *depart from iniquity* ; but they upon recovery, will by no means depart from their darling delight. Sometimes they soothe themselves with this word, “ He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life,” John iii. 36. Yea, but justifying faith purifies the heart, Acts xv. 9, fills it with dear affections unto heavenly things, deadens it to the world, and divorces it from all former carnal pleasures. Or this : “ I will give to him that is athirst, of the water of life freely,” Rev. xxi. 6. Yea, but they thirst only for salvation, not for sanctification ; for mercy, not for grace ; for happiness, not for holiness.

These men, as well as the second sort, will by no means go through the pangs of the new birth into the holy path. They wickedly misconceive, (out of the principles of their own wisdom, prejudice against the power of godliness, and pestilent persuasions of *pillow-sewers under their elbows*,) that in so doing, they shall be utterly undone, and never have a good day afterward ; but, (to speak in their own language,) fall presently into the hands of the Puritans, into preciseness, sourness, unsociableness, and melancholy. Therefore, upon the first fright, and feeling the smart of a confused remorse and horror for sin, without any thorough search into their hearts or lives ; without suffering the spirit of bondage to drive them to Christ, and a resolution to *sell all* ; they presently and inconsiderately apply all the gracious promises to their unhumbled souls ; and think they are justified by an heartless notion, which they call faith. And so resting in a persuasion, that they are true converts, ordinarily turn *carnal professors*.

Now, these carnal professors are a kind of people, who

have no more spiritual life than a dead faith can infuse into them ; no more comfort in the communion of saints than an outward correspondence in profession ; no more right to heaven, than a bold presumptuous confidence, built upon their own fancy, and satan's lying suggestions, can give them. Their sorrow for sin, at the most, is no more than afflicting their souls for a day, and bowing down their heads like a bulrush, without loosing the bands of wickedness, or departing from iniquity. Their conversion is nothing but a passage from a confused apprehension of sin, to a general application of Christ. Their new obedience consists only in a formal conformity to outward exercises of religion, without all true zeal, life, heartiness, holiness, or indeed honest dealing with their brethren. But let these men know, that Christ never pardoned any man whose spirit he did not purge from guile. He never saves any one from hell, whom he doth not first season with holiness and heavenly life. In vain do they build comfort upon his *passion*, who do not conform to his *Word*.

Many unfaithful men in the ministry, both in their publick teaching, and private visitations of the sick, have much to answer for in this point : who, for want of skill in that highest art of saving souls, of familiarity with God, and the secret workings of his Spirit, many times concur with such miserable men, in stifling the very first stirrings of remorse, by healing the wounds of their consciences with sweet words, before they be searched and sounded to the bottom ; and an unseasonable heaping of comfort there, where, as yet, a good ground-work of true humiliation is not soundly laid.

Amongst the many important parts of our ministerial employments, I fear this weighty affair of visiting the sick, is passed over also with much ignorance, slightness, and neglect. It is incredible to consider, how fearfully many offend, and what a deal of hurt they do, by observing one plodding general form, and that a poor one too, towards all patients promiscuously ; without any

judicious discretion in distinguishing the variety of spiritual states, the different degrees of unregenerateness, or former courses of life. Commonly their carriage in such cases is the same to the notorious sinner, and the mere civil man ; the formal professor and backslider ; the weak and strong ; the tempted and untempted Christian. If they but hear from the sick man a general acknowledgment of his sins, formal cries for mercy and pardon, desires to die the death of the righteous, they will presently tell him, All is well. Many a time such fellows as these discharge their common-place-books of all the places of mercy and comfort upon those men, who were never acquainted with the ways of God in their life-time, nor with the truth of their humiliation, or truly with the great work of repentance upon their beds of death.

But, not to dwell longer on these bye-paths ; there is one blessed way, besides all these, though it be a *narrow* one, which conducts directly out of a natural state, through the pangs of the new birth, into the paradise of grace. This neither plunges a man into the pit of despair, nor misguides him into the fool's paradise, nor pacifies unseasonably with counterfeit peace ; nor leaves in the deceiving forms of an unsound conversion ; but conveys him by an universal, sincere, thorough change into the holy path : and that by such degrees as these :

1. The first is, conviction of conscience, troubling the heart with a sight, sense, and horror of sin. The first work of the Spirit, John xvi. 8, is to *convince of sin* ; which presupposeth illumination, and produceth terror. The spirit of bondage must be first set on work, to shew us our spiritual misery.

2. In the second place, the person so convinced, comes unto the ministers of God, in the same mind that Peter's hearers did, Acts ii. 37, having his heart pricked and rent in pieces with legal terror, crying, " Men and brethren, what shall we do ? " And here the ministers of God have a strong and seasonable call to set forth the height, the excellency, the amiableness, and sufficiency

of Jesus Christ ; to magnify the invaluableness and sweetness of his person, passion, and promises. No sin of so deep a die, be it *scarlet* or *crimson*, but his precious blood can wash it out. No heart so dark or heavy, but one beam from his face can fill it full of spiritual glory. No man so miserable, but, if he will go out of himself and the devil's slavery, Christ will advance him *without money and without price*, from depth of horror to height of happiness.

3. Being truly informed in the mystery and mercy of the gospel, the poor wounded and weary soul begins to be deeply enamoured with Jesus Christ, as the only jewel and joy of his heart ; without whom he hath been heretofore a dead man, and should hereafter be a damned miscreant ; to prefer and prize him far above the pleasures, riches, and glory of the whole earth ; to set his eye and longing so upon him, as to hold himself lost for ever without his love. Nay, in the case he now stands, he is willing to pass through hell, if need were, to such a heavenly physician ; in whose blessed person alone, all the riches of mercy, compassion, and comfort are to be found. So that now the current of his best affections, and all the powers of his humbled soul are wholly directed toward him ; to whom the nearer he draws, the more heartily it grieves him, that ever he pierced so dear a Saviour, with such a loathsome life, and so many abominable, and now most abhorred provocations.

4. Upon his discovery of this *pearl of great price*, he now casts about by all means, how to obtain it. Oh ! what would he now give for it ! The command of ten thousand worlds would be in his conceit, but as dust in the balance, laid in the scale against Jesus Christ. But these things are not required at his hands. At last, he happily hits upon that, which God would have him to do. He even resolves to *sell all that he hath* ; to part with all sin, though it should be as dear as a right eye, or right hand.

5. Fifthly, to the person thus afflicted, all the promises

in God's blessed Book offer themselves, as so many rocks of eternity, for his wearied soul, tossed with tempest, sweetly to rest upon. God the Father runs, if I may so say, as the father in the gospel, to fall upon his neck, and to kiss him with the kisses of his sweetest mercy. Jesus Christ opens himself, as it were, upon the cross, to receive him graciously into his bleeding wounds; all which, he beholding with a spiritually enlightened eye, cannot choose but set his seal unto them, that they are true. And so by the help of the Holy Ghost, he casts himself with all the strength he can, into his blessed bosom, saying secretly to himself, "Come life, come death, come heaven, come hell, here will I stick for ever. And if ever I perish, they shall pluck me out of the hands, and rend me from between the arms of this mighty and glorious Redeemer."

6. And having now taken Christ, as a Saviour to free him from the miseries of sin, he is willing also to take him as a Lord, husband, and king; to serve, love, and obey him. For every one that is truly Christ's, doth as well thirst heartily, and sincerely endeavour after mortification, purity, new obedience, ability to do, or suffer any thing for Christ, as for pardon of sin, and salvation from hell. And therefore he willingly takes upon him his yoke; which though so called, yet is easy and light; enters in earnest into the narrow way: gives up all his abilities, loves, joys, endeavours, performances in any kind, to the Highest Majesty; and consecrates all the powers of his body and soul, to do him the best service he can unto his dying day, and still grieves and walks more humbly, because he can do no better. For, when he casts his eyes upon God the Father's free love, and Christ's dearest passion, he thinks, that if he were able to do him as much service, as all the saints do, both in this and the church above, with the addition of all angelical obedience, it were all infinitely less than nothing towards the discharge of his debt, and incomprehensible, everlasting obligation.

7. And being thus incorporated into Christ, he presently associates himself to the brotherhood, to the “sect that is every where spoken against.” He now begins to delight himself in them, whom he heartily hated before; I mean the people of God, professors of the truth and power of religion, resolving to live and die with these neglected happy ones, in all fair and faithful correspondence, sweetest offices of Christianity, and constant cleaving to the Lord Jesus, and his glorious cause. In the mean time, he makes conscience of sympathizing with them, both in their felicities and miseries. His heart is enlarged with lightness, or eclipsed with grief, as he hears of the prosperity or oppression of God’s people. I the rather here mention this mark of the true convert, because it is so much required; nay, infinitely exacted at our hands, in these heavy times of the church; and therefore may be to every one of us as an evident touchstone, to try whether our profession be vital or formal.

8. By this time he is become the *drunkard’s song*; table-talk to those that *sit in the gate*; *musick* to great men at their feasts; a *by-word* to the children of fools. And what then? Even thus they dealt with David, Job, and Jeremiah. Nay, they told the *Son of God* himself, that he was a *Samaritan*, and *had a devil*. What man then, that looks to be saved, will look for exemption? Especially since all those contumelies, contempts, and nick-names, with which lewd tongues load the saints of God, are so many honourable badges of their standing on the Lord’s side.

Thus much of the theory, as it were. I come now to the practical part; to a particular application of some sovereign antidotes to the most grievous, ordinary maladies incident to the souls of real Christians. But first I would advise thee to consider the *name of the Lord*, which he proclaims Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7, wherein he first expresseth his essence in one word: The LORD, The LORD; which repetition is effectual to stir up Moses’s attention. Secondly, three attributes: 1st, his power,

in one word, *strong*: 2dly, his justice, in two forms of speech: “not making the wicked innocent; visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children, unto the third and fourth generation:” 3dly, his special goodness towards repentant and believing sinners, in seven particulars; “1. merciful; and, 2. gracious; 3. long-suffering; 4. and abundant in goodness; and, 5. truth; 6. keeping mercy for thousands; 7. forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin.” In which there are implied unanswerable replies to all the scruples, doubts, exceptions, and objections which may arise in a troubled soul.

1. Thou sayest, perhaps, that thou art plunged into the depth of spiritual misery, both in respect of sinfulness and Divine wrath; the present sense whercof, perhaps, is ready to drive thee into despair. Be it so. Then cast thine eye upon the first and fairest flower in this glorious garden of Divine goodness, and thou shalt find a far greater depth of *mercy* ready to swallow up thy depth of misery. The mercy of God and man’s misery in this kind are relatives. No misery, no mercy; much misery, much mercy; transcendent misery, transcendent mercy.’ The only difference is, the mercy of God is infinite, thy misery finite. And therefore, how much spiritual misery soever thou bringest in a broken heart to the *throne of grace*, God’s bountiful hand will weigh out to thee a proportionable measure of mercy; nay, a measure without measure, superabundant, running over. For where misery in a truly humbled soul aboundeth, there mercy doth “much more abound.”

2. Or, suppose that, at thy first turning unto God, though truly humbled, yet thou art tempted not to take Christ, because thou art but now come out of hell, and horrible courses, and hast no good thing in thee at all:—Or, after some progress in Christianity, reflecting in time of temptation upon thy whole carriage, since conversion, and finding it to have been so fruitless and full of failings, thou concludest thyself to be extremely vile, that no pro-

fessor upon earth walks so unworthily ; and if ministers knew thy heart, and weak performance of holy duties, they would not be so forward to press comfort upon thee ;—I say, in these cases, it is a great happiness that the mighty Lord of heaven and earth hath proclaimed himself to be *gracious* ; which imports thus much, *to pour out abundance of extraordinary bounty upon a most undeserving creature* : to place dearest affection and desire of doing good there, where there is no desert at all. Therefore, bring unto the throne of grace but a true sense of thy misery, a sincere thirst for mercy, an humble acknowledgment of thine unworthiness, and God, for Christ's sake, will think thee worthy the *riches of his grace*, the righteousness of his Son ; all the promises in his book, all the comforts of his Spirit, a crown of immortality and bliss : for he is *gracious* ; and an universal, glorious confluence of blessedness, in all kinds, is promised to *poverty of spirit*.

3. But alas ! I, saith another, have most wretchedly mis-spent the flower of mine age in vanity : the best of my time hath been wasted in satan's service, and in the sensual serving myself. And therefore, though I be now weary of my former ways, and look back upon them with a grieved spirit, yet I am afraid God hath ceased looking after me ; that his patience towards me is expired ; and that he will not vouchsafe to cast his eye of compassion upon one so over-grown with corruption, and grown old in sin ; especially having so long *neglected so great salvation, forsaken mine own mercy*, and so unthankfully *despised the riches of his goodness and forbearance, leading me to repentance*. I confess, it is rare to see men grown old in sin returning and giving way to any saving work of grace ; yet, notwithstanding, be thou assured, if now at length thou be truly touched, and wilt come in earnest, the *Father of mercies* will receive thee freely to mercy, and embrace thy bleeding soul in the arms of his everlasting love. For it is a title of highest honour unto him to be *long-suffering*. He, all this while,

“waited that he might be gracious unto thee;” and now undoubtedly, upon thy first resolution to return in truth, he will meet thee with infinitely more affection than the father in the gospel met his prodigal; “who, when he was a great way off, saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.”

4. Yea, but saith another, Though I have been a professor long, yet many times my heart is heavy, and more loath to believe, when I seriously call to mind the heinousness of my unregenerate time; and see in myself besides, since I was enlightened, so many defects and imperfections every day; and such weak, distracted performance of commanded duties, both to God and man. Take then counsel and comfort in this case, by casting thine eye upon God’s *kindness*. He is *abundant in kindness*; who hath these four precious properties: 1st, To be easily entreated: 2dly, To be entreated for the greatest: 3dly, To pass by involuntary infirmities: 4thly, To accept graciously weak services. Even a frail man, if of a more noble, generous, and kind disposition, will be easily appeased for unintended offences and over-sights; and well pleased with the good-will, sincere endeavours, and utmost, especially of those whom he knows to be true-hearted unto him; and who desire heartily, if they were able, to do all he desires, even to the height of exactness and expectation. How much more then will our heavenly Father deal with his children, who is in himself essentially and infinitely *kind*?

5. Yea, but sayest thou, “Many times, when I reach out the hand of my faith, to draw some special promise into my soul for refreshing and comfort,—and weighing them well, and comparing my own worthlessness and vileness with the riches of mercy, grace, and glory shining in it, and marking the disproportion,—I am overwhelmed with admiration and astonishment: and to tell you truly, say sometimes to myself, “Is it possible that this should be so? That so glorious things should belong to such a wretch as I am?” But turning thine eye from a dis-

trustful dwelling upon thine own desert, to what Christ hath done for thee, and to the almightiness and all-mercifulness of him that promiseth; consider withal that God is also *abundant in truth*. Every promise in his book is as sure as himself, sealed with his Son's blood, and confirmed with his own *oath*. He must sooner cease to be God, and deny himself, than fail in the least circumstance or syllable of his immeasurable love and promises of life to any one that is true of heart. And therefore, when thy thirsty soul makes towards the well of life, by virtue of that promise, Rev. xxi. 6, "I will give to him that is athirst of the water of life freely;" and upon survey of the overflowing rivers of pleasures, which spring thence, begins to retire from it as too good news to be true; I say, then steel thy faith, and comfort thyself gloriously, by a consideration of that *abundant truth*, with which he hath crowned every word of his, stronger than a rock of brass, far surer than the pillars of the earth, or poles of heaven: nay, I speak an admirable thing, and of unutterable consolation, which cannot be violated without destruction of the Deity, most blessed and glorious for evermore. And let this ever banish and beat back all scruples, doubts and fears, which at any time offer themselves, and oppose thy unspeakable "joy and peace in believing."

6. Well, saith another, "I easily acknowledge the incomprehensible goodness in this *name of God*, and hold them most blessed who have their part and portion therein; but, for my part, I am afraid I come too late. I am afraid the mercy of God, to do me spiritual good, is already expired." Nay, but yet say not so, though it be with thee as thou hast said; for our gracious God "keepeth mercy for thousands." Here you must know, that a finite number is put for an infinite, and an infinite indeed. And therefore, if thou be willing to come in, and those thy brethren in sin, and hundreds, thousands, millions more,—or any whosoever, to the world's end,—God hath mercy in store for you all:—and being all

weary of all your *sins*, unfeignedly thirsting for the well of life, resolving for the time to come upon new courses, you shall be welcome to Jesus Christ. Even the last man upon earth, bringing a truly broken heart to the *throne of grace*, shall be crowned as richly, and with as large a portion of God's infinite mercy, and Christ's invaluable merit, as Adam and Eve, or whosoever laid first hold on that first promise, "The Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head," Gen. iii. 15.

7 "Yea, but, alas! I have been no ordinary sinner. My corruptions have carried me beyond the villanies of the vilest you can name. Not only the variety, but the notoriousness also and enormity of my wicked ways have set a brand upon me, even in the sight of the world; besides those secret pollutions and sinful practices which no eye but God's *beheld*. Had I not been stained with abominations of the deepest dye, and gone on thus with a high hand, I might have had hope; but now I know not what to say!" Take notice, then, to the end that nothing may possibly hinder or discourage any poor soul (which sincerely seeks for mercy, and desires to turn to God's side,) from assurance of a gracious acceptance; that it is natural also to his name "to forgive iniquity, transgression, and sin." That is, sins of all sorts, kinds, and degrees whatsoever. There is none so hateful and heinous, whether natural corruption, or outward transgression, or highest presumption, but, upon repentance, God is most able, ready, and willing to forgive.

Consider, in the second place, some of those streams of comfort which spring abundantly out of that fruitful fountain of compassion and love, Psal. ciii. 13, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." Hence may we draw refreshment to our thirsty souls, in many heavy thoughts, and grievous complaints.

1. In the distempers and damps of prayer, thus:— Suppose the dearest son of the lovingest father to lie grievously sick, and out of the extremity of anguish to

cry out, and complain unto him that he is so full of pain, in every part, he knows not which way to turn himself, or what to do; and thereupon entreats him to touch him tenderly, to lay him softly, and give him ease; how ready, think you, would such a father be, with all tenderness and care, to put to his helping hand? But yet, if he should grow more sick and weak, so that he could not speak at all; but only look his father in the face with watery eyes, and moan himself unto him with sighs and groans, and other dumb expressions of his increased pain; would not this strike deeper into the father's tender heart, pierce and melt it with more feeling pangs of compassion, and make his bowels yearn within him, with an addition of extraordinary compassion and care to do him good? Even just so will thy heavenly Father be affected with thee, in hearing, helping, and shewing mercy, when all thy strength of prayer is gone, except only *groans and sighs*: nay, with incomparably more affectionateness. For look how far God is higher than man in majesty and greatness, which is by an infinite distance and disproportion; so far doth he pass him in tender-heartedness and love. See Isaiah lv. 8, 9.

Or be it so, that thou art able to speak unto God, and in some measure to utter thy mind; but yet that it is so weakly, coldly, and confusedly, that thou thinkest it can answer no end, be of no use:—take notice here, that God's child is able sometimes to pour out his soul unto his God with life and power; sometimes to say something, but with much coldness, deadness of heart, and distraction, without his wonted feeling and freedom of spirit: and at other times he can say just nothing, but groan, and sigh, and only desire he could pray. For this last, look upon the last passage. For the second, to wit, when the Christian is troubled, that he can say something, and speak words unto God, yet it is without order and power; I say, in this case, consider, that as a father is more delighted with the stammering and imperfect talk of his own little child, when it first begins to

speak, than with the exactest eloquence of the most famous orator upon earth ; so, assuredly, our heavenly Father is infinitely better pleased with the broken, interrupted passages of prayer in an heart grieved, that it can do no better, nor offer up a more lively sacrifice, than with the excellently-composed petitions of the most learned Pharisee. Nay, his soul extremely loaths the one, and graciously accepts the other in Jesus Christ.

As concerning the complaint of coldness,—be assured, that though thy prayers proceed out of thy mouth faint and feeble, cold and uncomfortable, yet, springing from an heart humbled under God's mighty hand, seconded with groans and grief, with an holy anger and self-indignation, that are not more fervent and piercing,—they are most certainly enlivened with the intercessory Spirit of Jesus Christ, sweetly perfumed with the precious odours of his fresh-bleeding merits, and blessed mediation ; so that they strike the ears of the Almighty with far greater strength than is ordinarily imagined, and are as sweet-smelling sacrifices in his nostrils ; the very sight of whose crucified Son at his right hand, presenting the suit, can convert his displeasures and wrath into compassions and peace.

Now, blessed be God, that the weak prayers and broken sighs of tempted and troubled spirits have this happy promise and prerogative ; that before they press, as it were, into the presence of God the Father, they are mingled with the incense in the *golden censer* ; whence they ascend into the sight of our gracious Father, incorporated and interwoven into that precious and pleasing fume. And that it pleaseth *the blessed Spirit*, in the needful time of spiritual extremities, to enliven the petitions of our sometimes speechless, heavy, and distracted hearts ; Jesus Christ, the great *Angel of the Covenant*, to perfect, perfume, and present them ; and Him that, by an excellency and title of highest honour, is styled the *Hearer of prayers*, to receive them into his merciful hand, and bosom of compassionate acceptance ! Go on

then, poor soul! thou that sorely droopest under the sensible weight of thy manifold weaknesses and unworthiness, and thereupon sometimes sinfully drawest back, with some thoughts of ceasing quite; (which is that which the devil desires, and would utterly undo thee for ever;) press forward, in the name of Christ, unto the *throne of grace* with a lighter heart than thou art wont. Shall the Lord Jesus call and cry for a pardon for those who put him to death; who were so far from seeking unto him, that, like so many *evening wolves*, they sought and sucked his blood? And will he shut his ears, thinkest thou, to thy complaints and groans, who valuest one drop of his blood to quench thy spiritual thirst, at an higher price than the worth of many worlds? Comfort thyself; it cannot be.

2. In the faintness of faith: thou beholdest sometimes a father holding a little child in his arms. Now whether dost thou think, is the child safe by its own or by the father's hold? It clasps about the father with its little weak hands, as well as it can, but the strength of its safety is in the father's arm. Nay, and the father holds the faster, when at any time he perceives the child to have left his hold. Thou art tied, as it were, unto Christ by a double bond: first of the Spirit, and secondly, of faith. Thou layest hold on Christ by *faith*, and he holds thee by his Spirit. Now thy infant faith, or faith after some good standing in Christianity, weakened and sorely wounded, hath lost its hold; and therefore thou thinkest all is gone; and walkest dejectedly and uncomfortably, as though not any promise in God's book, or drop of Christ's blood, were thine. But assure thyself, being sound at the heart, thy heavenly Father holds thee so fast by his Spirit, that no man or devil, not all the powers of darkness or *gates of hell*, can possibly pluck thee out of his hand. Nay, the excellency of his power is made more illustrious in thy greatest extremities and spiritual weakness. And he accounts it his highest honour to hold thee the fastest, when thy hold is gone. He is ever

most loving and tender-hearted in times of temptation; to all that are true of heart. To believe when the face of God doth shine upon thee with sensible refreshing, is no great matter; but then to believe, when the light of his countenance seems obscured, then is the highest praise. The very dull, senseless earth, upon which we tread, may teach us to rest upon God in such a case. It is a mighty and massy body, planted in the midst of the thin air, and hangs upon nothing, but only upon God's *Word*: by that alone it is established unmovably, keeps its place most steadily, never stirs from it. It hath no props or pillars to uphold it; no bars or beams to fasten it; nothing to stay or support it, but the bare *Word of God* alone; and yet not all the creatures in the world can shake it. Be it so, then, that thy faith hath lost its hold; that for the present thou findest no "joy and peace in believing," yet, for all this, cast thyself upon the "sure Word" of that mighty God, who hath "established all the ends of the earth," and reared such a great and goodly building, where there was no foundation; and questionless thou shalt be safe, and settled like "Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever."

3. In failings of new obedience: Thou puttest thy son into employment, settest him about thy businesses; he uses the utmost of his skill, and endeavours to do thee the best service he can, but yet comes short of what thou desirest, and fails in many particulars; and therefore he weeps and takes on, and is much troubled that he can do no better. Now tell me, thou whose heart is warmed with the tenderness of a father's affection, whether thou wouldst not be most ready and willing to pass by all failings in this kind? Nay, I know thou wouldst rejoice, and bless God that he had given thee a child so obedient, willing, and affectionate. Proportionably, thy heavenly Father sets thee on work to believe, repent, pray, read the Scriptures, hear the Word, confer, meditate, love the brethren, sanctify his sabbaths, humble thyself in days of fasting and prayer, pour out thy soul, day and night, (as

the times require,) in compassion, fellow-feeling, and strong cries, for the afflictions of Joseph, the destruction of the churches, and those brethren of thine who have so long lain in blood and tears ; to be industrious and serious in all works of justice, mercy, and truth ; and thou goest about these blessed businesses with an upright heart, and in obedience unto God ; but the performances come far short of what his Word requires, and thy heart desires ; and thereupon thou mournest and grieveest, and afflictest thy soul in secret. In this case now, of these involuntary failings, be most assured, thy all-sufficient Father “will spare thee as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.” Nay, and with so much more kindness and love, “as the heavens are higher than the earth,” and God is greater than man.

4. In case of spiritual desertion : Thy heavenly Father sometimes hides his face from thee, and withdraws his refreshing presence for a time ; not for want of love, for he loves thee with the very same love with which *he loves Jesus Christ* ; and that dear Son of his loves thee *with the same love his Father loves him* ; but to put more heat and life into thine affections towards him and heavenly things ; to cause thee to relish communion with Jesus Christ, when thou enjoyest it, more sweetly ; to preserve it more carefully ; to joy in it more thankfully ; and to shun more watchfully whatsoever might rob thee of it : to stir up all the powers of thy soul, and all the graces of God in thee, to seek his face again with more universal seriousness and industry. For we find with pleasure, possess with singular contentment, and keep with special care, what we sought with pain.

5. In times of trial : Thou seest sometimes a father setting his little one upon its feet, to try its strength, and whether it be able to stand, or not ; but withal he holds his arms on both sides to uphold it, and preserve it from hurt. Assure thyself thy heavenly Father takes care of thee with infinitely more tenderness, in all thy trials, either by outward afflictions or inward temptations.

“ Though thou shouldst fall, yet shalt thou not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth thee with his hand,” Psal. xxxvii. 24. Never did goldsmith attend so curiously upon those precious metals he casts into the fire, to be sure, that they tarry no longer in the furnace, than the dross be wasted, as our gracious God waits to take thee out of trouble and temptation ; when the rust is removed from thy spiritual armour ; thy graces shine out, and thou art heartily humbled, and fitted to do him more glorious service ; I mean, when he hath attained the end, which he mercifully intended for thy good.

Again, however weak thou art, that God does not despise thy desires to love and serve him, we may gather, first, from the nobleness of God’s nature, and the incomparable sweetness of his Divine disposition ; which by infinite distance, beyond all degrees of comparison, doth transcend the ingenuousness of the noblest spirit upon earth. Now, men of generous dispositions cannot despise the good-wills and affections of those who attend or depend upon them. Outward performances are often beyond our strength ; many times mingled with hypocrisies or flatteries, with by-respects and private ends ; but inward reverence and love, kind and affectionate feelings of the heart, are ever, by an uncontrollable freedom, exempted from dissembling and formality. Now if it be so, that even ingenuous men accept with special respect the hearty well-willing of their followers, though they want means to express it actually in visible effects, answerable to their affection ; how much more are spiritual longings, holy affections, thirsty desires, graciously accepted of that God, in respect of whose compassions, the bowels of the most merciful man upon earth are cruelty ; in respect of whose immeasurably amiable, melting disposition, the ingenuousness of the noblest spirit is disdain.

Men’s offices of love turn many times to our good and benefit ; but our well-doing extendeth not unto God. That infinite, essential glory, with which the highest Lord was, is, and shall be everlastingly crowned, can

neither be impaired by the most desperate rebellions, or enlarged by the most glorious good deeds. "Can a man," saith Eliphaz, "be profitable unto God, as he that is wise, may be profitable unto himself? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that thou art righteous? Or is it gain to him, that thou makest thy ways perfect?" And chap. xxxv. 6, 7, 8, "If thou sinnest, what doest thou against him? Or if thy transgressions be multiplied, what doest thou unto him? If thou be righteous, what givest thou to him? Or what receiveth he of thine hand? Thy wickedness may hurt a man, as thou art; and thy righteousness may profit the Son of Man." Were all the wicked men upon the earth turned into beasts, nay, incarnate devils; and the whole world full of such outrageous giants, as those which existed in the old world; and all with combined force and fury, should band themselves against heaven, yet they could not hurt God. "He sitteth between the cherubims, be the earth never so unquiet." Or, were all the sons of men, Abrahams or angels, and as many in number as the stars in heaven; and as shining both with inward graces and outward good deeds, as they are in visible glory; yet could they make no addition unto that incomprehensible Majesty. They could not confer so much as one drop to that boundless and bottomless sea of goodness, or the least glimpse unto that almighty Sun of Glory. "All nations before him are as nothing, and they are counted to him as nothing and vanity." Our sins hurt him not; our holiness helps him not: it is only for our good that God would have us good. No good, no gain accrues unto him by our goodness. If it be so then, that good turns do good unto men; and yet out of their ingenuousness, they most esteem kind affections, and can well find in their hearts to pass by failings where there is a heart and good will; to pardon easily want of exactness in performance, where there are unfeigned purposes; how much more will our gracious God, who gains nothing by all the good works in the world, out of the

depth of his dearest compassions, kindly interpret, and accept in good part, the holy longings, and hungry desires of a panting and bleeding soul? How willingly will he take the will for the deed; the groanings of the heart, before the greatest sacrifice?

2. A second reason may be taken from God's proportionable proceeding in his courses of justice and mercy. In his executions of justice he interprets and censures desires as deeds, affections as actions, thoughts as things done. "Whosoever," saith Christ, "looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." And so a malicious man, at the bar of God, goes for a murderer. If this then be God's proceeding in justice, we may confidently expect the same proportionable measure in his mercy. Shall an angry thought, hurtful only to the heart which harbours it, be charged with actual bloodshed. And shall not the panting thirst of a broken and bleeding soul after Christ, be bathed and refreshed in his precious blood? Yes, certainly; for God delighteth in mercy. He is exalted most gloriously, when he is pardoning sins, purging souls, pouring grace into sad and uncomfortable hearts. But on the other side, he is hardly drawn, not without much reluctance, delays, forbearance, and, as it were, some kind of violence offered, by excess of multiplied, rebellious provocations, to exercise his justice, and to punish for sin. When the cry of our sins comes first to heaven, he doth not presently pour upon our heads fire and brimstone; but, as loath to enter into judgment with us, he forbears, still waiting, when upon our repentance, "He may be gracious unto us;" until it come to that ripeness by the fulness and intolerable weight of our sins, that he can possibly bear no longer. And then also, when he is about to be delivered of his justly conceived, and long-forborn vengeance, mark how he goes about it. "Ah!" says he, "I will ease me of mine adversaries, and revenge me of mine enemies," *Isai. i. 24*. This aspiration argues a compassionate pang of grief, (speaking

after the manner of men) to proceed against his own people, though they had provoked him as enemies. "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together," Hos. xi. 8, 9. When he came against Sodom and Gomorrah, the most prodigiously wicked people that ever the earth bore; what a miracle was it, that he should be brought so low, as to say, "I will not destroy it for ten's sake," Gen. xviii. 32. So it is then, that mercy flows naturally from God, and he is most forward and free-hearted in granting pardons, and receiving into grace and favour: but justice is ever, as it were, violently pulled from him with "cart ropes of iniquity." He is pressed with our sins, "as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves," before we wring from him the vials of just wrath, and wrest out of his hands the arrows of deserved indignation.

That you err not in this point, conceive, that, both God's mercy and justice are originally and fundamentally, as God himself, infinite; both of the same length, height, breadth, and depth; that is equally endless, boundless, bottomless, unsearchable. Yet, if we consider the exercise of them abroad in the world; mercy, that sweetest attribute, and most precious balm to all bruised hearts, doth far surpass and outshine the other, though infinite excellencies of his Divine nature. His beams of mercy are fairly and plentifully shed into the bosom of every creature, and shine gloriously over all the earth, even from one end of heaven to the other. The whole world is thick set, and richly embroidered, as it were, with wonderful impressions of his goodness and bounty. In this great volume of nature round about us, we may run and read the deep prints and large characters of kindness and love, which his merciful hand hath left in every leaf, and page, and line of it. If mercy then be so magnified over all his works, we may more strongly build upon it; that if the hand of justice seize upon an

hateful thought, as a murderer, and stained with blood ; his arms of mercy will certainly embrace, and accept of a sincere desire for the deed done ; of hearty affections for the actions ; and of a grieved spirit for the grace it groans for. Cast not away thy confidence then, poor heart ! No, not in the lowest languishings of thy afflicted soul ; if thou be able to say with David, Ps. cxliii. 6, “ My soul thirsteth after thee as a thirsty land.” If thou feel in thy actions an hearty hunger after righteousness, to be both imputed to thee, and implanted in thee ; as well after power against, as pardon of sin ; be assured the well of life stands wide open unto thee, and in due time thou shalt drink thy fill. Thy soul shall be fully satisfied with the excellencies of Jesus Christ, evangelical joys, as with marrow and fatness ; and thou shalt be abundantly refreshed out of the river of his pleasures.

But concerning that desire which is acceptable to God, observe that it is, 1. Supernatural. For it follows an effectual conviction of sin, which is utterly above nature. The soul that is truly convinced, looking upon the glorious mystery of the Gospel, the excellency and offer of Jesus Christ, doth conceive by the help of the Holy Ghost, this desire, and vehement longing. Which you may then know to be saving, when it is joined with an hearty willingness, and unfeigned resolution to sell all ; to part with all sin ; to bid adieu for ever to every darling delight. It is not then an effect only of self-love ; not an ordinary wish of natural appetite ; of those who desire to be happy, but are unwilling to be holy ; who would gladly be saved, but are loth to be sanctified. 2. It ever springs from an humble, meek, and bruised spirit ; very sensible both of the horror of sin, and happiness of pardon ; both of its own emptiness, and of the fulness of Christ, never to be found in a self-ignorant, self-confident, unhumbled pharisee. 3. It must be constant, importunately greedy after sanctification. Not out of a pang, or passion only ; or begot by the tempest of some present extremity, like a flash of lightning, and then vanishing

away. 4. It is ever united and enlivened with a continued use of the means ; and draws from them spiritual strength and vigour : much vital efficacy and increase ; not idle, ignorant, unexercised. It were vain for a man to talk of his desire to live ; who would neither eat nor drink, nor sleep, nor take medicines, nor use those means which are ordinary and necessary for the maintenance of life. It is as foolish for any one to pretend a desire to be saved, and yet will not prize and attend the faithful ministry, the word preached and read, prayer, meditation, vows, days of humiliation, the use of good company and good books, and all Divine ordinances, and means appointed and sanctified by God, for the procuring and preserving a good spiritual state. 5. It is not a lazy, cold, heartless, indifferent desire ; but an earnest, eager, vehement thirsting, as the parched earth for refreshing showers ; or the hunted hart for the water-brooks. Never was Ahab more sick for a vineyard, Rachel more ready to die for children, than a truly humbled soul is desirous of Jesus Christ, of being washed in his blood, and hiding itself in his blessed righteousness. This desire deadens the heart to all desires after earthly things, gold, pleasures, fashions, even the delights of the bosom-sin. All other things are but dross and dung, in respect of that object it hath now discovered. This spiritual desire devours all other desires and affections after worldly contentments as empty clouds, wells without water, comforters of no value. We that deal with afflicted consciences, hear many expressions of this impatient, violent desire. “ I have borne nine children,” said one, “ with as great pain, I think, as other women : I would with all my heart, bear them all over again, and pass again through the same pangs every day, as long as I live, to be assured of my part in Jesus Christ.” 6. It proceeds from appetite to endeavour, from endeavour to action, from action to habit, from habit to perfection in Christ. If it stand at a stay, it is to be reputed rootless, heartless, graceless. He that rests upon a desire

only of good things, never desired them savingly. But here, lest any tender conscience be troubled, I must confess, it is not growing so sensibly at certain times, as while the pangs of the new birth are upon us, and in times of temptation ; though even then it grows in an holy impatience, restlessness and longing, which is well-pleasing unto the Father of Mercies in the mean time ; and which he accepts graciously, until he give more strength.

The point, thus cleared, is very sweet and sovereign ; but so, that no carnal man must come near it. Nay, the Christian himself, in the time of his soul's health, and flourishing of his faith, must hold off his hand. Only let him keep it fresh in his memory, as a rich pearl against the day of spiritual distress. As precious and cordial waters are to be given only in swoonings and faintings, so this is especially to be made use of in the straits and extremity of the soul ; at such times, and in such cases as these following : First, The strugglings of the new birth. When, therefore, thou art once come so far, as that after a thorough conviction of sin, thine heart is filled with vehement longings after the Lord of Life ; if thou feel in thyself any hearty hunger and thirst after the favour of God, that Fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, and fellowship with Christ, assuredly then the well of life is already opened unto thee, by the hand of thy faithful Redeemer : and amidst the sorrows of thy trembling heart, thou mayest even challenge it at his hands. When heavy-heartedness for sin hath so dried up thy bones, and the angry countenance of God so parched thine heart, that thy poor soul begins to gasp for grace as the thirsty land for rain, thou mayest, though dust and ashes, with an holy humility, thus speak unto thy gracious God, "O merciful Lord God, thou art Alpha and Omega, 'the Beginning and the End. Thou sayest, 'It is done,' of things that are yet to come ; so faithful and true are thy promises.' And thou hast promised, that 'unto him that is athirst, thou wilt give of the water of

life freely.' O Lord, I thirst, I faint, I languish, I long for one drop of mercy. 'As the hart panteth for the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.' Had I ten thousand lives, joyfully would I lay them all down, to have this poor, trembling soul of mine received into the bleeding arms of my blessed Redeemer. O Lord, my spirit within me is melted into tears of blood; my heart is shivered into pieces. Out of the place of dragons, and shadow of death, do I lift up my thoughts, heavy and sad, before thee. My bowels are hot within me; my desire after Jesus Christ, pardon and grace, is greedy as the grave, 'the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.' And, Lord, in thy blessed book thou callest, 'Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters.' In that great day of the feast, thou stoodest and criedst with thine own mouth, saying, 'If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.' And these are thine own words, 'Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, shall be filled.' I challenge thee, Lord, in this my thirst after thine own blessed self, and spiritual life in thee, by that word, and by that promise, which thou hast made, that thou perform, and make it good unto me, who lie groveling in the dust, and trembling at thy feet. Oh! open now that promised well of life: for I must drink or else I die."

Secondly, we may have recourse for comfort to this precious point, in some special temptations of fear about our spiritual state. For instance: Thou art afflicted, because thou feelest the spirit of prayer not to stir and work in thee with that life and vigour as it was wont; but to languish for lack of that vital heat in the intercourse between God and thy soul; which heretofore hath many times warmed thine heart with many sweet refreshings, springing from a comfortable correspondence between thy holy ejaculations and his heavenly inspirations; between thine humble complaints at the throne of grace and his gracious answers. Nay, it may be, thou throwest down thyself before his seat of mercy, in

much bitterness of spirit, and for the time canst say little or nothing ; the present dullness and indisposition of thine heart stopping all passage to thy wonted prayers, and damning up, as it were, the ordinary course of thy blessed conference with thy God in secret. But, tell me, poor soul ! though at such a time, and in such spiritual deadness, thou feelest not thine heart enlarged for the present, to pour out itself with accustomed fervency and freedom ; yet doth it not long to offer up unto his throne of grace thy suits and sacrifices of prayers and praises, with that heartiness and feeling, with all those broken and bleeding affections, which a grieved sense of sin, and an holy greediness after pardon, grace, and nearer communion with God, are wont to beget in truly humbled souls ? If so, assure thyself, this very desire is a prayer of extraordinary dearness with thy God.

Thirdly, Thou mayest be diversly distressed upon thy bed of death. 1. Casting thine eye back upon thy whole life, all thy sins from Adam to that hour, they appear to the eye of thy conscience far more in number, and more ugly, than ever before. Whereupon, comparing the poor, weak nothingness of thy godly sorrow, and opposition against them, with their heinousness, hatefulness, and horrible number, thou beginnest to be dejected, and knowest not well what to think of thyself. 2. Revising now, thy whole Christian conversation ; spending of sabbaths, pouring out of prayers, reading the Scriptures, hearing the word, love of the brethren, days of humiliation, works of mercy, receiving the sacrament, living by faith in all states ; thou mayest see them in this last, impartial examination, to have been pestered with so many imperfections, distractions, distempers, that thou beginnest to fear. 3. Thou mayest be troubled at that time ; because, being perhaps, as yet, but of little standing in profession, thou hast done God so little service ; and in that short time, hast not stood on God's side with that courage and life, nor walked in his holy ways with that watchfulness and zeal. as thou mightest. Assure

now thyself, in these three cases, the desire of thy soul will be graciously accepted of our merciful God, in the name of Jesus Christ; as though thy repentance had been to the full; thy obedience to the height; and thy present resolutions performed to the utmost. For when all is done, Jesus Christ is all in all. He alone is the Sanctuary and Tower of everlasting safety, for every truly humbled soul to flee unto, both in life and death. He is made unto us "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption."

I come now to some special cures for divers spiritual maladies. 1. I will suppose thou art wrought upon by the Spirit of God, and feelest thyself to be a most sinful and cursed wretch by nature; lost and forlorn, condemned and utterly undone in thyself: and upon the opening of the glorious mystery of the Gospel, thou art ravished with extraordinary admiration and affection, after that hidden treasure and pearl of great price. Most willing, therefore, art thou "to sell all that thou hast;" prizing it infinitely before the riches, glory, and pleasures of the whole earth. But yet, alleging, that thou art the unworthiest upon earth; the vilest of men; no heart so hard as thine; thy sins far above ordinary; of an abominable stain; of a scarlet and crimson dye. Thou professest against thine own soul, that as yet thou canst not, thou darest not, thou wilt not be persuaded, that Jesus Christ belongs unto thee. What! such a vile, unworthy, abominable wretch as thou! to expect such glorious things! to come near so pure a God! to lay violent hands upon the Lord of Life, and look for everlasting bliss! Alas! say what you will, sayest thou, as yet I cannot, I dare not, I will not. Whereupon thou liest still upon the rack of spiritual terror; and art, all the while, far more liable to satan's most horrible injections, and cruelest temptations to self-destruction, despair, or at least to plunging again into former pleasures.

It grieves me to consider, how fearfully thou deceivest thine own heart, to thy much spiritual hurt. Why,

therefore thou art welcome to Jesus Christ, because thou art so sensible of thy spiritual misery. That which thou makest thy great discouragement to come unto Christ, should be the greatest encouragement to cast thyself into the bosom of his love. Though thou comest freshly out of an hell of heinous sins; and, hithertó, hast neither thought, or spoke, or done any thing, but abominably; yet, if now, with true remorse, thou groanest under them all, as a heavy burden, and longest for the Lord Jesus, and newness of life, thou art bound presently to take Christ himself, and all the promises of life as thine own. All delays, exceptions, objections, scruples, distrusts, and contradictions, are dishonourable to God's mercy, a disparagement to the promises, derogatory to the truth and tender-heartedness of Jesus Christ; an unnecessary detainment of the soul in terror; and only a gratification of that *roaring lion*, whose trade is to tear souls in pieces. Now then come and take abundantly mighty arguments, (which neither man nor devil can ever gain-say,) not to lie any longer upon the rack of terror; but to lay hold upon the *rock of eternity*: I mean, to rest thy trembling heart upon the Lord Jesus, with everlasting peace and safety; and after walk watchfully and fruitfully in the holy way, until thine ending hour.

1. Take notice, That Jesus Christ, "God blessed for ever," *keeps an open house* for all such hungry and thirsty souls. "Let him that is athirst, come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely," Rev. xxii. 17. *Whosoever will*, in whose heart soever the Holy Ghost hath wrought an earnest, hearty will; that desire which prizeth the *well of life* before the whole world, and is ever accompanied with unfeigned resolution to *sell all* for the "pearl of great price;" such an one may come, and welcome, and that without bidding, and drink his fill of the rivers of all spiritual pleasures. If there were no more, but this; this is more than enough to bring thee to Jesus Christ. If a proclamation should

be made, that such, or such a great man kept open house for all comers, there need be no more to bring in all the poor, hungry people in the country, without any further waiting or inviting. But here, above all degrees of comparison, the hunger is more importunate; the Feast-maker more faithful and sure of his word; the fare more delicious; and why dost thou refuse? Thou hast a warrant above all exception. The Lord of Life keeps open house for all that *will* come. And thou knowest in thine own conscience, and canst not deny, but that he hath already honoured thee with that singular favour, as to plant in thy soul a *will*. For what wouldst thou not part with, to have assurance of thy part in Jesus Christ? What wouldst thou not give, if it might be bought, to hear him speak unto thy soul, and say, "I am thy salvation?" And, therefore, if thou come not in presently, and take the comfort of this precious place and promise; "setting to thy seal that God is true;" consider, whether thy terrors and temptations be not justly upon thee.

2. If this will not serve, (which God forbid,) then in the second place, thou art *invited* solemnly, by the Feast-maker himself, by his own mouth, "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden." Here is no exception of sins, times, or persons. And if thou shouldst reply, "Yea, but alas! I am the unworthiest man in the world, to draw near unto so holy a God; to press into so pure a presence; to expect upon the sudden such glorious and heavenly advancement. Most impure, abominable, and beastly wretch, that I am! I am fitter to sink into the bottom of hell, by the weight of my manifold, heinous sins." I say then, the text tells thee plainly, that thou mightily mistakest; for therefore only art thou fit, because thou feelest thy unfitness, vileness, wretchedness. The sorer and heavier thy burden is, the rather shouldst thou come. In a word, it appears, by thine own words, expressing such an apprehension of

thy spiritual poverty, that thou art the man, and such as thou alone, whom Christ here especially invites and accepts.

3. He *knowing our frame*, our sluggish, heavy disposition; our spiritual laziness, and loathness to believe; adds in another place, to ordinary visitation, *a stirring, compassionate, and quickening* exclamation: "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." And, lest any think he should bring any thing in his hand, he calls upon "him that hath no money;" and thus doubles his cry, "Come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money, and without price." O most blessed lines! so full of love and longing, to draw us to the well of life; that besides that holy pang of compassion, *Ho!* he cries thrice, *Come! Come! Come!* Yea, but mayest thou say, "Alas! I am so far from bringing any thing in my hand, that I bring a world of wickedness upon my heart; and that above ordinary, both in notoriousness and number; and therefore I am afraid the heinousness of my sins will hinder my acceptation." Be it so; yet the Spirit of God, in the same chapter, doth purposely meet with, and remove that very scruple: "Let the wicked," saith he, "forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts:" (and this is thy case; thou art unfeignedly set against all sin both inward and outward,) "and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon," Isaiah lv. He will not only *have mercy upon thee*, but he will also *abundantly* pardon, he will *multiply* his pardons, according to thy provocations, and that with *super-abundance*.

4. If all this will not yet do; he descends out of the infinite riches of *his grace* to a miracle of further mercy. For the mighty Lord of heaven and earth sends ambassadors unto us, dust and ashes, worms and no men, *to beseech us to be reconciled unto him*. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled

unto God," 2 Cor. v. 20. What man can possibly ponder this place, but must be transported with admiration; nay, adoration of the bottomless depth, and infinite height of God's love? We, most abhorred, vile wretches, are the offenders, traitors, rebels, and enemies; and ought to seek and sue unto him first, upon the knees of our souls, trembling in the dust; and, if it were possible, with tears of blood; and yet he begins with us, intreating us by his own Son, and his servants the ministers, to come in, accept his favour and grace, enter into the *wise and good way*, which is *precious, profitable, honourable, and pleasant*; that he may hereafter set upon our heads everlasting crowns of glory. An earthly prince would disdain to send unto his inferior for reconciliation; especially one who had behaved himself basely, and unworthily towards him. It is thus indeed with worms of the earth, *in whom there is no help*, and whose breath is in their nostrils; but it is otherwise with the King of kings. He is content to put up at our hands, this indignity and affront, if I may so speak. He is glad to sue unto us first, and send his ambassadors day after day, beseeching us to be reconciled unto him. O incomprehensible depth of unspeakable mercy and encouragement to come in, and trust in his mercy, in case of spiritual misery, able to trample under foot triumphantly, all oppositions of the most raging hell, or distrustful heart!

5. Nay, he *commands* us, "and this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ," 1 John iii. 23. This command alone of the all-powerful God, should infinitely out-weigh all countermands of heaven or earth; flesh and blood, satan, nature, reason, sense; the whole creation, and all the world: it should swallow up all scruples, doubts, fears, despairs. Coming to Jesus Christ with broken hearts, according to this commandment, will bear us out against all oppositions, accusations, weaknesses of faith in evil times, in the hour of temptation, upon our beds of death, at that last day. It will be a plea at such times, utterly

above all exception, against all allegations, terrors, and temptations to the contrary, to say, "I was humbled under the burden of sin, and a sense of my spiritual misery. God in mercy offered me his Son Jesus Christ freely, by the ministry of the word : I thereupon thirsted for his person, and an interest in his precious blood, that I might obtain pardon and power against my sins. He called upon me, and commanded me to drink my fill of 'the water of life freely.' I accepted his gracious offer, and, according to his commandment, cast myself upon the Lord Christ, and since that time he hath given me power to serve him in sincerity of heart. This is my warrant, even the commandment of my blessed God, *thus to drink when I was thirsty.*" In thy case then, who thirstest, yet refusest to drink, consider how unworthily thou dishonourest God, and wrongest thine own soul, by suffering the devil's cavils, and the exceptions of thine own distrustful heart, to prevail with thee against the direct command of Almighty God ; which thou oughtest to obey against all reason, sense, fears, doubts, despairs, and hellish suggestions. Abraham did readily submit to God's commandment, even to sacrifice his own son with his own hand ; and wilt thou stand off, and refuse, when he commands thee to take his own dearest Son ; especially, since thou takest with him, all blessings both of heaven and earth ? Prodigious madness ! cruelty to thine own soul ! at which heaven and earth, men and angels, and all creatures, may stand amazed, that thou shouldst so wickedly and wilfully, *forsake thine own mercy*, and "neglect so great salvation."

6. Lastly, lest he should let pass any means to drive us unto Christ, and settle our souls upon him with sure confidence, he also *threateneth* : "And to whom swear he, that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not ?" Heb. iii. 18. Wherein he expresseth extremest anger. He "swears in his wrath," that no unbeliever shall enter into his rest. In the threats of the moral law, there is such an oath, but a secret reserve of

mercy, upon the satisfaction of the Divine justice some other way. But herein the Lord is peremptory, and a third way shall never be found, or afforded to the sons of men. Neglect of such a gracious offer must needs provoke so great a God; for, with prodigious ingratitude and folly, it flings, as it were, God's free grace in his face again. The "Prince of peace," upon whose thigh is written, "King of kings, and Lord of lords," passing by more excellent and noble creatures, sends unto thee, whose "father is corruption, and the worm thy mother and sister;" and who, in respect of thy spiritual state, liest *polluted in thine own blood*, and offers "to betroth thee unto himself in righteousness, and in loving kindness, and in mercies;" to crown thee with all the riches, both of his kingdom of grace and glory. Now, if thou shouldst stand off, which God forbid; as thereupon out of perfection of madness, thou forsakest thine own salvation; so thou most justly enforcest that blessed Lord to swear in his wrath, that thou shalt never be saved. What an unworthy thing is this; that all the precious promises in the book of God, confirmed with his own oath, and sealed with his Son's blood, should suffer dishonour, as it were, by thy distrust: as though so many mighty rocks of mercy and truth were not able to sustain a poor bruised reed?

If God would not give us Christ, without some matter and motives in us; without something done by ourselves first; it were something to stand out in such a case. But he gives him most freely, without any respect at all of any precedent work or worth on our part. Indeed there is required a predisposition in the party to take Christ; as he must be truly wounded, sensible of satan's yoke, feel his own misery, and thirst for Christ more than the whole world. Albeit such dispositions as these serve only to drive us unto Christ, and to let us see and feel the necessity of him; but they are infinitely, with more than an utter impossibility, unable by any worthiness, to draw on Christ. He is a gift, Rom. v. 16. And what

is freer than a gift? Nothing is required at our hands for receiving him, but empty-handedness, and sensibleness of our own nothingness. Our heavenly Father never did, nor ever will sell his Son unto any justitiary; or any, that will needs be something in himself. He ever did, and ever will give him to every poor soul that is vile in his own eyes, nothing in himself; "labours, and is heavy laden," and willing to take him as a Saviour, and a Lord. A full hand can hold nothing; either it must be empty, or we cannot receive Christ. First, *thirst*, and then "buy, without money, and without price," Isaiah lv. 1. If God then be so infinitely good, as to offer his Son so freely; and thou art fitted to receive him by a sense of thy spiritual misery, thirsting for his blood, resolving upon his service for the time to come; how unadvisedly cruel art thou to thine own conscience, and unmannerly proud, that thou wilt needs stand off still from taking the Lord Jesus; and suffer still thy poor trembling soul to lie unnecessarily upon the rack of terror? Since thou gettest nothing thereby, but God's dishonour, thine own wilful torture, and the gratification of satan's malicious cruelty.

"But were it not fitter for me," mayest thou say, "first to amend my life; to do some good works; before I be so bold as to lay hold on Christ?" I answer: thou must first be alive, before thou canst work. Thou must have spiritual ability inspired, before thou canst walk in the good way. Thou must be justified before thou be sanctified. Now spiritual life is only then, and never before, or by any other means infused, but when we reach out an empty hand, and take Jesus Christ into our humbled souls. When a poor soul, weary of all sin, according to his *call, commandment, and counsel*, rolls itself, as it were, upon the Lord Jesus, then is spiritual life first breathed into it. The vital operations of grace in all holy duties, good deeds, holy walking, universal obedience, must appear afterward. Casting ourselves upon that Lord of life, as our only joy, with whom we

are resolved to live and die, draws from him into our souls that heavenly virtue, whereby we are afterward enabled to exercise all the functions of spiritual life, and to die to the world, and all worldly pleasures for ever. Herein is thy fault. Thou conceivest not aright of God's free grace; but thinkest thou shalt not be welcome, except thou comest with thy cost. Whereas God ever gives his Son freely; and bids thee come and "buy, without money, and without price."

But, thou sayest again, "Will it not be presumption in me, having no good thing in me at all, but coming now fresh from a most wicked, abominable life, to take Christ as mine own, and all those precious promises sealed with his blood?" Enough hath been already said, to meet with this objection. It is not presumption to come when thou art called. How can he be said to presume, who is both *invited* and *intreated*, *commanded* and *threatened* to come in. It were execrable presumption, for any man, who purposeth to go on in any one known sin, to believe that Christ is his righteousness and sanctification. But where all sin is a burden, every promise as a world of gold, and the heart sincere for a new way, there a man may be bold. For thee to have pretended to have a part in Christ, while wallowing yet in thy sins, had been horrible presumption indeed; and for me to have applied the promises, and preached peace unto thy remorseless conscience, before the pangs of the new birth had seized thee, had been damnable daubing. But in the case I now suppose thee to be, it is both seasonable, and surely grounded, for me to assure thee of pardon; and for thee to receive Jesus Christ without any more ado, into the arms of thy humbled soul. And indeed thy soul being thus humbled, if thou now standest out, and refusest to accept of Jesus Christ, as he is offered to thee in the gospel; thou doest great dishonour not only to the free love of God, which giveth us his Son, without money and without price, as hath been taught before; but also to his sweet name, which pre-

vents all the reasons thou canst bring for standing out, as you have seen before ; and likewise to his glorious attributes of *truth, mercy, and power*.

And 1. By refusing to accept of Christ, thou greatly dishonourest the *truth* of God. "He that believeth, hath set to his seal that God is true," John iii. 33. He that *labours, and is heavy laden* with the burden of sin, comes to Christ for ease, when he is called ; takes him for his Saviour and his Lord ; *puts to his seal* that Christ is true ; that his precious promise, "Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," Matt. xi. 28, is inviolable : whereby Christ Jesus, blessed for ever, is mightily honoured, and his truth glorified. But he that in this case holds off, makes him, who is truth itself, a liar : "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar," 1 John v. 10. Which dishonour to the mighty Lord of heaven and earth, is the greater, and is much aggravated by the infinite infallibility of the promises. For besides his *word*, which were more than immeasurably sufficient, he hath added a most solemn *oath* for our sakes, that we might have greater assurance, and stronger consolation.

2. His *mercy*. Mercy in God is his nature and essence ; and as is his majesty, so is his *mercy*. We then greatly dishonour him in refusing mercy, in such a case, for all the heinousness, or number of sins ; seeing, that no sins, either for number, or notoriousness, in a truly broken heart, can make so much resistance to God's infinite mercies, as the least spark of fire to the whole sea.

3. His *power*. Perhaps thou wilt reason within thyself, and cavil cruelly against thine own soul thus : "Alas ! what talk you of taking Christ, the promises of life, and heavenly lightsomeness ; my poor heart is as dark as the very middle of hell ; much harder than a rock of adamant ; as cold and dead as the senseless centre of the earth ; as uncomfortable and restless almost, as desperation itself. It is impossible, that such a dark, hard, dead, comfortless thing should ever be enlightened,

softened, quickened, and established with joy." But mark herein, how thou unadvisedly undervaluest, and unworthily settest bounds to the unlimited power of God. Whereas thou shouldst imitate Abraham, *the father of them that believe*, "who staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief: but was strong in faith, giving glory to God: being fully persuaded, that what he had promised he was able to perform," Rom. iv. 20, 21.

4. Thou dishonourest likewise even his *justice*. Christ's blood is already paid, as a price for the pardon of the sins of thine humbled soul; and thou wilt needs pay it over again, or else thou wilt not enter upon the purchase: as though God did expect and exact the discharge of the same debt twice; which to imagine, were a monstrous, intolerable indignity to the most just God. If a man, who having a debt fully discharged by the surety, should press upon the principal for the payment of the same again, we should think him to be a very unjust, cruel, and merciless man. What a fearful dishonour then is it to the merciful and righteous Judge of all the world, to conceive, that, having received an exact and full satisfaction for all our sins, by the blood of his own dear Son, he should require it again at our hands. We may assuredly build upon it, as upon a rock of eternal truth; that when we come unto Christ, weary of all our sins, thirsting sincerely for him, and throwing ourselves upon him, as salvation itself; resolved to take upon us his sweet and easy yoke for the time to come; he doth presently, as he hath promised, take off the burden, and free us entirely from the foul guilt and tyrannical power of sin.

Now, if thou wilt cast thyself upon Jesus Christ, being so humbled, spiritually thirsty, and resolved, as thou hast said, and I supposed at the first: (for we, who are God's messengers, comfort and assure of pardon in such cases only;) thou shalt then do as God would have thee; and mightily honour the invaluable and infinite

dignity of his Son's passion, the precious freeness of all the *promises*, his *free love*, *sweet name*, *truth*, *mercy*, *power*, and *justice*; thou shalt also defeat the devil's present fiery darts, and projects of further cruelty; disentangle and unwind thyself out of the irksome maze of restless terrors, and trouble of mind; crown thy own soul in the mean time "with peace that passeth all understanding."

"Yea," but may another say, "I have cast myself upon Jesus Christ, and there, by the mercy of God, am I resolved to stick; and yet no comfort comes: what shall I think of myself in this case?" I think, in such a case, such an one hath cause seriously and impartially to search and try his spiritual state. For which purpose ponder seriously such considerations as these: some of which may discover unsoundness; others unadvisedness. 1. It may be, the person is not yet come in truth, to sound *humiliation*, *contrition*, spiritual *thirsting*, and a resolution to *sell all*, but only hath passed over these things superficially, not sincerely; and then no marvel, though no true and real comfort come. 2. Or it may be, howsoever he protests otherwise, and for all his trouble of mind, his deceitful heart may still secretly harbour some sweet sin, as pride, revenge, lust; from which it doth not heartily resolve and endeavour to make an utter divorce. And assuredly, that false heart, which regards and allows any wickedness in itself, howsoever it may be deluded with some flashes; yet shall never be truly refreshed with "joy in the Holy Ghost." 3. It may be, though there was some plausible shew that the party was cast down with the heavy weight of sin, yet that the true cause of his heaviness and bitterest complaint, was some secret earthly discontent. And, in such cases, remove this, and you remove his pain; comfort him about his cross, and you set him where he was. And therefore, as in all this he continues a mere stranger to the sweetness, amiableness, and excellency of Jesus Christ; so it

is impossible that he should be acquainted with any sound spiritual comfort.

But I will suppose all to be sincere, and as it should be: let me advise thee then to take notice of thine unadvisedness. 1. Thou art, perhaps, so drowned in the distractions of a sad heart, that thou utterly forgettest to give thanks, and magnify God's mercy, for convincing and terrifying thy conscience; offering his Son; raising in thine heart a thirst after him; and giving thee spiritual ability to rest thy weary soul upon him. And who knows not, that unthankfulness keeps many good things from us; and is a bar to intercept the comfortable current of God's favours. 2. Or it may be, when a minister, upon thy complaint that no comfort comes, doth seriously labour to settle thine heart in peace; telling thee, that as thine humbled soul, leaning upon Christ, draws much sanctifying grace from him; so it may, and ought also to draw abundance of spiritual joy from that ever-springing fountain of life; yet notwithstanding all this, thou sufferest the contrary suggestions of the devil to frustrate all these glorious messages. And therefore it is just with God, that thou fare the worse at his hands, and fall short of thine expectation; because thou givest more credit to the father of lies, than the Lord of truth. Many, in such cases, while God's messenger stands by, opening and applying the rich treasures of God's free mercy, and with present replies, repelling satan's cavils, are cheered and revived; but when he is gone, they give way again to that foul, lying fiend, to cast a mist over the tender eye of their weak faith.

3. But suppose a man be truly humbled, thankful, resolute against all sin, and labour to *believe*, and yet no comfort come? I say then, there is another duty expected at thy hands, right precious and pleasing unto God: and that is *waiting*. By which God would, 1. Work more hungering and thirsting, greater longing

and panting after the ravishing sweetness of his comfortable presence ; with which melting, earnest, crying, dispositions, he is very much delighted. 2. Cause us with peace and patience to submit unto, and depend upon his merciful wisdom, in disposing and appointing times and seasons for our deliverances. For he well knows that very point and period of time, when his mercy shall be most magnified, his children's hearts most seasonably comforted, to pour out themselves in praise ; and his, and our spiritual enemies most gloriously confounded. 3. Quicken and set on work with extraordinary fervency, the spirit of prayer ; fright us further from sin for the time to come ; fit us for a more fruitful improvement of all offers and opportunities to do our souls good ; to make more of "joy and peace in believing," when we enjoy it ; and to declare to others in like extremity, God's dealing with us, for their support.

We must learn then, to expect, and be content with God's season ; and hold up our hearts in the mean time with such considerations as these : First, we perform a very acceptable service, and a Christian duty, right pleasing unto, and much prevailing with God, by *waiting* : Secondly, by our patient dependence upon God, we may mightily increase, and multiply our comfort, when his time is come. For he is wont to recompense abundantly, at last, his longer tarrying, with excess of joy, and overflowing expressions of his love. Thirdly, we must ever remember that all the while he exerciseth us with *waiting*, that season is not yet come, which in his merciful wisdom he holds the meetest to magnify the glory of his mercy, and to advance our spiritual good. But I desire to come yet nearer to thy conscience. Thou sayest, that thou art *weary of all thy sins*, hungerest and thirstest after the righteousness of Christ ; prizest him before all the world ; hast cast thyself upon his truth and tender-heartedness, for everlasting safety ; and yet thou feellest no special sensible joy in thine heart thereupon. Be it so ; yet, upon this occasion, take my counsel, and

have recourse afresh unto the *promises*: settle thy soul upon them seriously, with fixed meditation, and fervent prayer: set thyself purposely with earnestness and industry, to suck from them their heavenly sweetness. And then, how is it possible, that thine heart should make resistance to those torrents of spiritual refreshings, which, by a natural and necessary consequence, spring abundantly from the comfortable conclusions, grounded upon the *sure Word of God*, and thine own inward sense, and most certain undeniable experience?

But there are many who complain of the great disproportion between the notorious wickedness of their former life, and their bewailing of it; between the number of their sins, and fewness of their tears; the heinousness of their rebellions, and little measure of their humiliation. And thereupon, because they did not feel those terrors in turning unto God; those violent pangs in the new birth, which they have seen, heard, or read of, in others, perhaps, less sinners than themselves; they are much troubled with doubts about the truth of their conversion. Whereby they receive a great deal of hurt and hindrance in their spiritual state. For satan gains very much by a suggestion, thereby labouring, and too often prevailing, First, To hinder the Christian in his spiritual building; for with what heart can he hold on, who doubts of the soundness of the foundation? Secondly, To abate his courage in standing on God's side, his patience under the cross, and spiritual joy; to keep him in dulness of heart, deadness of affections, distractions at holy exercises, and under almost continual sadness. Thirdly, To fasten a great deal of dishonour upon God; when he can make the Christian disavow, as it were, so great a work of mercy, stamped upon his soul by an almighty hand: a work, for wonder and power, answerable, (if not transcendent,) to the creation of the world. To the production whereof, the infinite mercies of the Father; the warmest blood of his only Son; the mightiest *moving* of the blessed Spirit were required.

Now what an indignity is offered unto so glorious a Workman, and so blessed a work, to assent unto satan, a known liar, that there is no such thing?

But to keep myself to the point. Those, who complain, that the pangs of their new birth were not answerable to the heinousness of their former courses, and who, therefore, suspect the truth of their conversion, may have their doubts increased, by such propositions as these; which divines, both ancient and modern, let fall sometimes in their penitential discourses. “Ordinarily men are wounded in their consciences at their conversion, answerably to the wickedness of their former conversation.—Contrition, in true converts, is, for the most part, proportionable to the heinousness of their former courses.—Sorrow must be proportionable to our sins.—The greater our sin, the fuller must be our sorrow.—He that hath exceeded in sin, let him exceed also in sorrow. Grievous sins require most grievous lamentations.—The measure of your mourning must be agreeable and proportionable to the sin.” And yet, I say, First, That between sin and sorrow, we cannot expect a precise proportion. Great sins should be greatly lamented; yet no sin can be sufficiently sorrowed for; though it may be savingly. When we say, the pangs of the new birth must be answerable to the former sin, we mean, not that we can mourn for sin according to its merit; that is impossible: but great sins require a great deal of sorrow. We must not think, that we have sorrowed enough for any sin; for we can never sorrow sufficiently. Secondly, If you ask me, when trouble for sin is saving: I answer, when it is true. If you further demand, when it is true? I say, when it drives a man to *sell all*, in the sense I have said before; and brings him with a settled resolution, to Jesus Christ, to live and die with him, as a Saviour and a Lord, and is accompanied with an universal change in “body, soul, and spirit.” Thirdly, Observe, that God, being a most free agent, doth not tie himself constantly and invariably to the same measures and

times of working upon his children. For he is wise without limit, and above measure; and therefore hath many secret and glorious ends, which, according to his good pleasure, much diversify the means subordinate thereunto. From whence may spring these conclusions:

1. He may, for the most part, create in the heart of the true convert, terrors and troubles of conscience; amazements and mourning, answerable, in some good measure, to his former wicked ways.

2. He may sometimes suffer a notorious sinner to pass more easily through the pangs of the new birth. But then such an one is wont to walk more humbly before God all his life after; for that he was not humbled with more remarkableness of penitent remorse, and spiritual anguish in his conversion. Or else upon some occasion afterward in his Christian course, he may be exercised afresh, with more terror and trouble of conscience, than in his first change. In such cases as these, 1. If he should, by some violent enticement, be entangled again, with any former sensual pleasure, or by neglect of watchfulness over his ways, be suddenly surprised with some new scandalous sin. 2. Upon the assault of some extraordinary frightening temptation. 3. When some heavy cross, or sickness, after many prosperous days, shall seize upon him, which may lie sore and long. 4. Upon his bed of death; especially, if he fall upon it immediately after some relapse, backsliding, or new wound of conscience. There is a kind of natural power, besides God's special hand, in sickness, sorrow, darkness, melancholy, the night, extraordinary crosses, the bed of death, to represent the true number and heinousness of sins with greater horror, and more unto the life: whereas, prosperity, health, and days of peace, do rather delude the eyes of the conscience; and like false and flattering glasses, make those foul fiends seem fairer than they are indeed.

Besides the cases above-mentioned, this terror and trouble of conscience may befall them, 5. For their own trial. This was the end, as it may seem, why Job was

set up as a mark, for whole armies of terrors to fight against. He approved himself to be steel to the back, as they say, by that victorious ejaculation, chap. xiii. 15, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Whereby God was mightily honoured, satan utterly confounded, that controversy, "Whether Job feared God for nought, or not," gloriously ended on God's side. 6. That, tasting again the bitterness of Divine wrath for sin, they may flee further from it. 7 That thereby the incomprehensible love of Christ toward them, may sink deeper into their hearts; who for their sakes and salvation, drank deep and large; and the very dregs of that cup; the least drop whereof is to them so bitter. 8. That by sometimes feeling the contrary, their joy in the light of God's countenance may be more joyful; their spiritual peace more pleasant, the pleasure of grace more precious, the comforts of godliness more comfortable. 9. For admonition to others: to draw duller and drowsy Christians to more strictness, watchfulness, and zeal; by observing the spiritual troubles of those, who are far more holy than themselves: to intimate unto formal professors, that all is certainly naught with them, who ordinarily are mere strangers to all afflictions of soul, and sorrow for sin. 10. For terror to many, who, going on securely in their sensual courses, are wont to cry down all they can, the power of preaching, by crying to their companions thus, or in the like manner: "Well, for all this, we hope, hell is not so hot, nor sin so heavy, nor the devil so black, nor God so unmerciful, as these precise preachers would make them." How may such as these be terrified upon this occasion, when pondering upon that terrible place, 1 Pet. iv. 17, 18, "If judgment begin at the house of God, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved," (if God's children have their consciences scorched, as it were, with the flames of hell,) "where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear," but in the bottom of that fiery lake, and amidst the unquenchable rage of those endless flames,

3. God may sometimes, for some hidden, and holy ends, seeming good to his heavenly wisdom, bring a less heinous sinner, through extraordinary horror, out of his natural state, into the good way. And terrors and troubles may be multiplied in our enlargement, from the state of darkness, and chains of the devil, by,

First, some preparatives, which God sometimes in his unsearchable wisdom, doth immediately suffer to fall out : as, 1. Some heavy cross, and grievous affliction ; to make the power of the law fall more heavily upon our stony hearts. This we see in Manasses, who, by the heaviness and horror of his chains, “ was humbled greatly before the God of his fathers.” 2. Strange terrors, sometimes arising from external accidents ; yea, hidden natural causes, visions, bodily distempers, horrible injections, and hideous thoughts, whereby they are mightily affrighted before-hand, and prepared to pass through the pangs of the new birth more terribly. 3. Some heinous and crying sin, which he suffers some to fall into, and immediately upon it, awakens the conscience. That Almighty Physician, who is able to bring health out of poison ; death out of life ; light out of darkness ; may by accident, as they say, prepare one to conversion,* by giving him over to some abhorred abominations. 4. Lying long in ignorance, sensuality, and dissolute sort of life, without profitable and powerful means. In this case, upon the first awakening, and affrighting the conscience for sin, it may be exposed to many terrible perplexities. And we find by experience, what an hard task it is, to undertake to heal a poor, ignorant soul, troubled in mind. The cure is many times very difficult, dangerous, and long. The darkness of their ignorance, (they being now distressed in conscience,) is very fit matter for satan to work in hideously. His main plot against such ordinarily is, to drive them to self-destruction, before they get

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\* Say rather, punish him for his past sins, or carelessness.

understanding in the ways of God ; or we can get any competent light into their consciences.

Secondly, some concurrent circumstances : as, 1. A melancholy constitution. That humour doth naturally give edge to terrors and sorrows. 2. The crabbedness and crookedness of his natural disposition, which must be tamed with violence. An hard and knotty block must have an hard wedge. God is here wont sweetly, and wisely to apply himself to the several natures and dispositions of his children. 3. Height of place, and happiness of this life : whereby it comes to pass, men so deeply drowned in sensuality and earthly-mindedness, for a thorough change, have need to be taken down thoroughly with a deep sense of legal terrors. 4. Excellency of natural or acquired parts and endowments ; as wit, learning, courage, wisdom, wretchedly abused, and long misemployed, upon wrong and wicked objects. Many times, a great measure of humiliation will hardly fright such vain over-valuers of themselves, from their follies. And here also satan interposeth most furiously, and hinders this happy work all he can : for he well knows, that if such parts should be turned the right way, his kingdom would fare the worse. And therefore he opposes it with all his power ; raising as many tempests of terror, as he is able ; that he may either drive them back, or swallow them up into the abhorred gulf of despair. 5. A more searching and piercing ministry ; which is ordinarily wont to awaken the conscience with more terror ; to fill it with more universal, and clearer light, to quicken it with more apprehension ; and so proportionably, to afflict it with a more feeling and fearful sense of God's most just and holy wrath against sin. 6. Not opening the wound of conscience betimes to some skilful soul-physician, may be an unhappy means, much to enlarge, both the continuance and extremity of a man's spiritual trouble. Shame, bashfulness, pretence of want of opportunity, hope to get through by himself, are ordinary keys to lock up his tongue at such a time. But

sure I am, satan hath a chief hand in such concealment : for alas ! he wins by it woefully. Let such an one then be ever sure most resolutely to break through the devil's snare ; and to pour out his soul betimes into some faithful, holy bosom.

Let us observe, thirdly, the ends for which God prepares some by their sore travail in the new birth. He may purpose sometimes in such cases : 1. To employ them, as Christ's resolute and undaunted champions in more worthy services. In managing whereof, remembrance of their having been once, as it were, in the mouth of hell, serves as a continual spur to act nobly, and to supply them, from time to time, with mightiness of courage, and eminency of zeal. 2. To make them afterwards of excellent use, out of their former experience, to speak unto the hearts of their brethren, ready to sink into the same gulf of horror, out of which the good hand of God's gracious Providence hath, by such and such means, so mercifully pulled them. 3. To render them to the church mirrors of self-denial, heavenly-mindedness, and holy walking with God. Mindfulness of their former wrestling with the wrath of God, despair, and the horrors of hell, make them ever after mindless of earthly things, weaned from the world, startling at every appearance of evil, greedy of godliness, conversing in heaven. For conclusion : let all those, who have passed through the pangs of the new birth, not so terribly, (especially, having been formerly notorious,) be advised to *humble themselves in the sight of the Lord*, yet more and more unto their dying day. The humblest Christians are ever highest in favour, and nearest in familiarity with Almighty God.

4. In the fourth place, I come to *spiritual desertion* ; which puts the Christian, for the present, into a dark and discomfortable condition. I mean, when the most wise God, for some holy ends seeming good unto himself, with-holds from the heart of his child, the light of his countenance, the beams of his favour, and sense of his

love. He then feels in himself a fearful deprivation, and discontinuance of the fruition of God ; of joy in the Holy Ghost ; cheerfulness in well-doing, and godly duties ; confidence in prayer ; assurance of being in a state of salvation. This secret and wonderful work, doth God exercise on his children, in many cases, and for many causes.

1. Sometimes upon a re-ensnarement in some bosom-sin, which was their darling and delight. God therefore may hide his face from a man, and leave him to the darkness of his own spirit ; so that he may for a long time walk on heavily, void of hope, spiritual joy, peace of conscience, and a sense of God's favour.

2. Sometimes the Lord may, for a time, withdraw the light of his countenance, and sense of his graces from his child ; that he may be driven thereby to take a more serious, thorough survey of his youthful sins ; and so be put again, as it were, into the pangs of his new birth, that Christ may be more perfectly formed in him. That he may make a new inquisition, and deeper search into the whole state of his conscience, of his conversation, and every corner of his heart ; and so for the time to come, more carefully shun and cut off all occasions of sin ; and with more resolution and watchfulness, oppose every lust, passion, distraction in holy duties, enticements to relapse, spiritual laziness, lukewarmness, and worldliness ; with greater severity to crucify his corruptions, and execute the law of the Spirit against the rebellions of his flesh.

3. For trial, quickening, and exercise of spiritual graces ; that they may put forth themselves with the more power and illustriousness. God's withdrawing the light of his countenance ; being to them, in this case, as water cast upon the smith's forge, to make some of them especially, to burn inwardly, as it were, in the mean time with more heat, and all afterward to break out, and flame more gloriously. There are many gracious dispositions in the Christian's heart, which would never see the light, at least with such eminency, were it not for this trial. The

brightness of lamps languish in the light, but they shine clear in the dark. The splendour and beauty of the stars would never appear, were there no night. "You have heard of the patience of Job," saith James; and we read also of his excellent faith, when he said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him:" but we had neither heard of, nor admired the one or the other, had he not been afflicted, both with outward troubles and inward terrors.

It is no such great matter to be confident, when we are encouraged with "joy and peace in believing;" but then to stick to Christ, and his sure Word, when we have against us, sense and reason, flesh and blood, fears and feelings, heaven and earth, and all creatures; that is the faith indeed; there is the true splendour of that heavenly jewel. That prayer is truly fervent, fullest of spirit, and enforced with most unutterable groans, which is poured out for the recovery of God's countenance, after it hath been turned away from us for a time. That love is most industrious and mighty, groweth strong as death, and into a most vehement flame, which is enkindled in the upright soul, when her dearest love is departed. That thankfulness, which springs from a sensible re-enjoyment of Jesus Christ, and return of the sense of the savour of his good ointments into the soul, hath far more heart and life, than the free and full possession of the visible glory, and outward comfort of the whole world. Thus doth our gracious God, who can bring light out of darkness, life out of death, something out of nothing, heaven out of hell, come nearer unto us, after departing from us. By the dead winter time of a spiritual desertion, he may bring, by his blessed hand of mercy, and quickening influence, more strength, activeness, and excellency into all our graces.

Let every Christian, by the way, take notice of this point; it may be of use to him in some spiritual extremity hereafter: "God may sometimes withdraw and delay his comfort, to draw his children through all the means: which, when they have passed, without pre-

vailing, he after, and immediately, when he pleases, puts to his helping hand, that they may not attribute it to the means, though never so excellent ; but to the mercies of God, the only well-spring, both of the first plantation, continuance, and everlastingness of all spiritual graces."

4. The world sometimes, that mighty enemy to the kingdom of Christ, aided under-hand by our false hearts, and the devil's craft, steals away, by little and little, their spiritual strength, and supplants them at length, and throws them upon the earth. Nay, too often by its syren's songs, it lulls them into a slumber of carnal security ; and that so dangerously, that though the Lord Jesus, the beloved of their soul, cry aloud in their ears, by the piercing sound of his spiritual trumpeters ; and, by the more immediate motions of the Holy Spirit, entreat them to shake off that carnal drowsiness ; to let the earth fall out of their minds ; and again to mind heavenly things ; saying, " Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled : for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night : " yet for all this, they frame many shifts, excuses, and delays, to put off those calls of love and merciful importunities. Whereupon their blessed spouse so unworthily repelled, departeth from them for a time ; withdraws the life and light of his gracious presence ; hides the comfortable beams of his favour ; and so leaves them to the darkness of their own spirits, in the comfortless damp of a just desertion ; that thereby, they may be schooled to prize Jesus Christ before gold and silver ; to listen with more reverence to his heavenly voice, in the ministry of the Word ; and to make more dear account of godly comforts, when they shall recover, and re-enjoy them.

Having thus discovered the causes of desertion, I now come to the comforts and the cure. And I. Consider that some graces are more substantial in themselves, more profitable to us, and of greater necessity for salvation ; as faith, repentance, love, obedience, self-denial, the being vile in our own eyes, and walking humbly with

God. Others are not so absolutely necessary ; as sensible comfort in the Holy Ghost, rejoicing in hope, and a lively freedom in prayer. And from hence mayest thou take comfort in two respects : 1. Desertion deprives thee only of these comfortable accessaries ; but thou art still possessed of the substantials of salvation : of which, not the utmost concurrence of all hellish and earthly rage can rob thee, unless thou yield to sin and unbelief. 2. The loss of these less principal graces is intended to drive thee nearer to Christ, by many unutterable groans ; every one whereof is a strong cry in the ears of God ; and causeth thee better to prize, exercise, and improve those other more necessary graces, without which thou canst not be saved.

It is a wise passage in Mrs. Juxon's Monument, page 60 : " She continued faithful to the end, in the most substantial graces. For howsoever she mourned for want of that degree of joy, which she had felt in former times ; yet she continued in repentance ; in the practice of holiness and righteousness ; in a tender love to God, his Word, and children ; in holy zeal, and fruitfulness, even to the last period of her days. And indeed, her want of joy was so sanctified unto her, that it was a furtherance to a better grace ; namely, to repentance, and self-denial, and base esteem of herself. And I call repentance a better grace than joy ; because, howsoever joy is a most excellent gift of the Spirit ; yet unto us, repentance is more profitable. For I make no question, but that a mourning Christian may be saved, without ravishing joy ; and that Christ may wipe away his tears in heaven ; but no Christian shall be saved, without repentance and self-denial."

For instance : through the darkness and distress of our spirits in spiritual desertions, we are made to feel our want of faith, pray for, and endeavour to exercise it : and have recourse with more desire and longing to all the fountains of life ; the person and passion of Christ ; the promises ; God's free-grace ; his sweet name ; and we

survey them more seriously ; sound them to the bottom ; that by some means, at least, our faith may subsist, and hold up the head in such an evil time. It is now put to the exertion of the very utmost of all its heavenly vigour and valour ; and enforced to put forth its highest act ; even to cleave fast to the sure word of God, against all sense and feeling ; against all terrors, tricks of satan, and temptations to the contrary. And by this extraordinary exercise and wrestling, faith is notably strengthened, and confirmed for the time to come. For as sloth, idleness, and want of exercise do much emasculate, and make our bodies more inactive, but hardship and employment do much quicken and strengthen them ; so it is in the present point. Without opposition and assault faith languisheth ; but when storms and spiritual troubles arise, it stirs up itself ; gathers its strength and forces together ; casts about for assistance by prayer, ministerial counsel, meditation upon special promises ; experimental recollecting of former deliverances, mercies, and favours conferred on ourselves and others. And thus it becomes far more excellent and victorious.

Repentance also is furthered by this inward trial and struggle : and that in respect, 1. Of a sight of sins. For through the glass of spiritual affliction we see more of them, and those more monstrously vile. The clouds of inward trouble specially unite, as it were, and engage the sight of our souls ; and so represent our sins more to the life, and in their true colours ; whereas the glistening of prosperity is wont to disperse and dazzle it. 2. Of a sense of them. We are then more apprehensive of Divine wrath, and the weight of sin, when we are afflicted with a taste of those seas of bitterness and terror, which it merits at the hands of God. 3. Of hatred and opposition thereto ; we then grow into a more hearty loathing of that sweat meat, which we were too apt to hide under our tongue, when we feel it turned into gall. We shall afterwards be far more watchful, and afraid to give entertain-

ment in our bosoms to those vipers, which have so stung us.

Again, this conflict in time of desertion, makes self-denial more resolute and complete. For the dearest and most desirable things of this life, compared with Christ, were never viler dung than at such a time. We then find it most true, that though all the stars shine ever so bright, it is still night, because the sun is gone ; but the alone presence of that prince of light creates a comfortable day, though never a star appear. So let us enjoy the Lord Jesus ; and no matter, though all the creatures in the world be turned into bears or devils about us. But if he withdraw himself, the confluence of all the comforts the whole creation can afford, will do us no good at all.

Moreover, this conflict quickeneth notably our new obedience. In respect, first, Of holiness towards God, and reverent, heavenly behaviour in the duties of the first table. A general trial whereof, we may take, by comparing mariners in a storm, and arrived in the haven ; prisons with theatres ; burials with banquets ; beds of sickness, and expectations of death, with strength of youth, and prosperous health ; and which is quite for my purpose, fits of temptation, with times of spiritual freedom therefrom. For as in the one state, we may observe too much presumption, forgetfulness of God, security, and sloth ; so in the other, trouble, danger, and distress, much alter the case. We shall then see persons bitterly bewailing their former sins, trembling in the dust, seeking early God's face, falling to prayer, vowing better obedience, and promising, upon deliverance, much holiness and a happy change. What mighty groans of spirit proceed from them in such a case, which are the strongest prayers, though in that agony they falsely complain that they cannot pray ? How greedy are they of godly conference, counsel, and comfort out of the Word, days of humiliation, of the most searching sermons, goodliest company, presence and prayers of the holiest ministers ! How fearful

are they, to hear any worldly talk upon the Lord's day ! How sensible of the least sin, any dishonour done to God, and all appearance of evil ! In a word, how busily are they employed about that one thing needful ?

Secondly, Of compassion towards others. Sufferings are calculated to soften men's hearts towards their brethren. Personal miseries make them pitiful to others. Experience of our own weaknesses, wants, danger of sinking under the waves of God's wrath, and disability to subsist by ourselves, begets a sweet mildness, and gentle behaviour towards our neighbours ; whose assistance, visitation, and prayers, we now see we stand in need of. Prosperity is apt to produce scornfulness, insolence, self-confidence, and contempt of others ; but God's hand upon us, especially in afflictions of soul, teacheth us another lesson ; to wit, how frail, weak, and unworthy we are.

Thirdly, Of self-knowledge. In times of peace and calmness, looking through the false spectacles of self-love, we are ready to out-prize our gifts ; to mistake shadows for substances ; mites of virtues, for richest talents ; the infant beginnings of grace, for tallness in Christ : but let the touchstone of some sorer trial represent ourselves unto our ourselves, and we shall more clearly see our spiritual abilities, in their true nature and proportion. Then all unsound semblances of sufficiencies, and former flourishes of unhumble assurance, will vanish quite away, and come to nothing in the fire of spiritual afflictions. Then the weakness of our too much vaunted Christian valour will be discovered unto us, when we are put to wrestle with the wrath of God, and left to the horror of some hideous temptation.

2. Hear what Mr. Hooker, a man of great learning, says in the present case : " Happier a great deal is that man's case, whose soul, by inward desolation is humbled, than he, whose heart is, through abundance of spiritual delight, exalted above measure. Better is it sometimes to go down into the pit with him, who beholding darkness, and bewailing the loss of inward joy, crieth from the

bottom of the lowest hell ; ‘ My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?’ than continually to walk arm in arm with angels, to sit, as it were, in Abraham’s bosom, and to have no thought but of peace, and blessing ourselves in the singularity of assurance above other men ; to say, ‘ I desire no other bliss, but only duration of my present comfortable feelings and fruition of God : I want nothing but even thrusting into heaven ;’ for in the heighth of spiritual ravishments, thou art in great hazard of being exalted above measure ; and so mayest be justly exposed to a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of satan to buffet thee. But now on the other side, humiliation under God’s mighty hand, is the nearest step to exaltation of spirit ; and spiritual darkness is wont to go immediately before the glorious sun-rise of heavenly light.”

3. Think it not strange, that thou art fallen into this kind of spiritual affliction, as though some strange thing, or that which may not befall the dearest servants of God, had happened unto thee. For herein thou becomest conformable to as holy men as ever the world had. Nay, to the Son of God himself ; from whose example, let the Christian, even in the darkest horror of desertion, when he is afraid, lest God hath forsaken him, fetch abundance of comfort and support out of such considerations as these :

1. Christ himself was in the same case : besides a numberless variety of most barbarous cruelties, inflicted upon his blessed body, he suffered also in soul most intolerable torments and pain. He grappled with the fiercest wrath of his offended Father for our sins ; and sweat blood under the sense of his angry countenance. Nay, this cross upon his soul, infinitely more weighty than that which he carried upon his shoulders toward Calvary, did not only cause streams of great bloody drops to fall down to the ground ; but also prest from him that heavy groan, Matt. xxvi. 38, “ My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.” And that last bitter cry, “ My God ! my God ! why hast thou forsaken me ?”

chap. xxvii. 46. If Christ Jesus himself then, blessed for ever, the Son of the Father's love, the Prince of Glory, nay, the glory of heaven and earth, the Brightness of the everlasting Light ; in whom he professeth himself to be well-pleased, and for whose sake only he loves all the sons of men, was thus plunged into a depth of unknown sorrows, and most grievous desertion ; let no Christian cry out, in the like spiritual desolation, (but ever immeasurably short of his) and in his fear of being forsaken, that his case is singular, desperate, irrecoverable. For the only dear, innocent Son of God, was far worse in this respect, and in greater extremity, that he is, can, or ever shall be.

2. As our ever-blessed Redcemer was in himself infinitely free from all sin ; so by consequence from any inherent cause of the least cross. For he was of a most pure and holy nature ; all his life long kind, sweet, and gracious to every creature ; offending none, doing good unto all ; in his death, brought as an innocent lamb to that bloody slaughter, not opening his mouth, for all those base and barbarous provocations of the merciless miscreants about him ; bathed in blood, burning in zeal, wrestling in prayer, even for the salvation of his enemies. So that his guiltless and unspotted soul had no need at all of any passion or expiation. All his sorrows and sufferings were voluntarily undergone, only for our sakes and sins. Had not the precious blood of the only Son of God been poured out as water upon the ground, never had any son or daughter of Adam been saved.

Is the heart of any mourner in Zion heavy, and ready to break for sorrow, because he hath lost the light of God's face, feeling of his love, and consolations of his grace ? So that the darkness of his spirit thereupon frights him with temptations to despair, and fears, lest he be forsaken ? O then let him have speedy recourse unto this heavenly cordial ; when our Lord, and our Love felt the curse of our sins, and his Father's hottest wrath coming upon him in the garden ; without any outward

violence at all, only out of the pain of his own thoughts, bled through the flesh and skin, not some faint dew, but even solid drops of blood ; and afterwards in the bitterness of his soul, he cried out upon the cross, “ My God ! my God ! why hast thou forsaken me ? ” And nothing of this for himself ; (for no stain at all did cleave to his sacred soul,) but all this, (the least of which we can no more express, than we could undergo) for our sakes and salvation alone. And, therefore, ground upon it, as upon the surest rock, even in the height of thy heavy-heartedness, and depth of a spiritual desertion, that those depths of sorrow, whereof we can find no bottom ; through which he waded in his bloody sweat, his cry upon the cross, and painful sufferings in soul, were certainly endured to free thee from the guilt and vengeance of all terrors of conscience, agonies of spirit, temptations to despair, and damnations of hell. Our dearest Saviour hath satisfied to the utmost, with his own blood, the rigour of his Father’s justice in thy behalf ; and therefore thou shalt not perish. Inward afflictions, and troubles of mind, may for a time press thee so sore, that thou mayest be ready to sink ; for

1. Chastisement.
2. Trial.
3. Prevention of sin.
4. Perfecting the pangs of the new birth.
5. Example to others.

But in despite of the united rage and policy of all infernal powers, thou shalt in due time be raised again by that victorious and triumphant hand which bruised the serpent’s head, and burst the heart of hell ; even out of an horrible pit, be set upon a rock, far above the reach of all hellish hurt, or sting of horror. “ In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy upon thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer,” Isai. liv. 8.

3. There is another terrible fiery dart, dipt full deep in the very rankest poison of the infernal pit ; which, though it be not much talked of abroad, nor taken notice of in the world ; yet is secretly suggested, and managed with extreme malice and cruelty, in the silent bosom of God’s blessed ones. The most holy hearts are many times

haunted with this foulest fiend. Strangers to the ways of God are not much troubled in this kind, nor vexed with such horrors. Satan is not wont to wield this terrifying weapon against them, save only upon special advantage ; as, under some extraordinary misery, or in excess of melancholy, to drive them thereby to self-destruction, or despair. And to this end he sometimes hideously afflicts some grievous sinner, through God's permission, and by him intended to prepare him (though the devil himself *meaneth not so*,) for the pangs of the new birth, deeper humiliations, and more vehement desires to get under the wings of Christ from that hellish vulture. Or, he may sometimes mingle these horrible stings with the terrors of spiritual travail, on purpose to hinder conversion, by a diversion into by-ways, or frightening back again to folly and former courses. But the ordinary objects of satan's malice in this point are only those who have escaped out of his hands already. And I know not whether there be any of these who do not, less or more, at one time or other, suffer under this horror. And yet every one of them thinks himself singular in this suffering, and that it is not usual for God's children to have such prodigiously foul and fearful thoughts put into their heads, which they dare not mention for their abhorred greatness, neither remember without trembling. Now, by this *dreadful engine* of the devil, I mean, *hideous injections, horrible thoughts, blasphemous suggetions, monstrous conceits* of the most holy, pure, and ever-glorious God, his Word, divine truths, the Lord Jesus, blessed for ever ; or some way or other about spiritual and heavenly things, framed immediately by satan himself, and with furious violence thrown into our minds infinitely against our wills ; at which not only religion, but also reason, nay, even common sense, stand astonished and shrink back. Some of God's children are sometimes so pestered with their irksome intrusions, that whatsoever they speak, do, hear, read, or think upon, is wrested, perverted, and hellishly impoisoned with this temptation of blasphemy. And it is

ordinarily prest upon them with most importunity when they are best exercised in the holiest duties, as in prayer, hearing, or reading the Word, singing of psalms, and on days of humiliation. Now for support in such a case, ponder well and apply such considerations and counsels as these :—

1. In this terrible temptation also thou becomest conformable to thy Lord and Master, and to many of his blessed saints. Was there ever suggestion like this in execrableness and horror, that *the King of Saints* should *fall down and worship* the prince of hell? And yet this most horrible blasphemy was injected into the most holy imagination of Jesus Christ; with which it was infinitely more impossible to be any ways tainted than the fairest sun-beam with the foulest dirt. But he endured it and conquered, and that for our sakes only; even for such excellent ends as these: 1. That when we are set upon by sátan in the same kind, and so hideously assaulted, that, upon the first sense, we are ready to sink under the sudden fright; and to think that none in the world are so but we; yet, upon mature consideration, we may comfortably recover, and presently conceive that our case is not singular, and incompatible with a saving state; for even the Son of God himself surpassed us in the same suffering. 2. That he might take the venom, sting, and guilt from this hateful and horrible temptation, to the world's end. 3. That having himself tasted the devil's malice herein, he might, out of his own feeling and experience, more tenderly regard our troubles and terrors that way; more mightily fortify and free our spirits against the invasion and surprise of all such prodigious injections and flashes of hell.

2. It is the concurrent judgment of learned and holy divines, that these *monstrously blasphemous thoughts*, and satanical suggestions, resisted and not consented unto, are not *our sins*, but *our crosses*. Or, suppose there should be any taint on our parts, yet, condemning them in our judgments, and abhorring them with our hearts,

We may be most assured that the blood of Jesus Christ is infinitely more mighty and sovereign, to take away the venom and vileness of them, than the devil malicious and subtil to inject. Therefore thou mayest be assured that they are not imputed unto thee at all; but wholly set on satan's score. Hence it is, and from this ground, that I have many times told some, thus tempted, that when they have passed a day prest upon violently, and pestered with the furious intrusion of such unutterably foul and fearful injections, they have, in all likelihood, spent that day with far less sin in their thoughts, and more freedom from guilt, and provocation of Divine anger, than if they had been free. Because these injections, being so earnestly deprecated, withstood with such aversion and loathing, protested against unfeignedly, and that upon such terms that they would rather be torn in pieces with wild horses, die ten thousand deaths,—do, or suffer any thing, rather than yield the least assent or approbation thereunto;—they are then, I say, not their *transgression*, but *affliction*; not their *iniquities*, but *miseries*. Nay, and further for their comfort, if they should be haunted by them until their ending hour, (which God forbid!) yet, cleaving close unto the Lord Jesus, hating all sin, and having respect to all God's commandments; these things are not able at all any whit to hinder, hurt, or prejudice their spiritual state, and everlasting salvation.

3. Every servant of Christ hath his share in some affliction, and is made, in some measure, conformable to him in his sufferings. Those who have the reins laid and left upon their necks, without curb or correction, are *bastards*, and not sons. They may, as the Holy Ghost tells us, prosper in this world, and pass peaceably out of it; but when all is done, they are undone everlastingly. But it is not so with the servants of God: "He scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." "He hath only one Son without sin, none without suffering," saith an ancient father. But here take notice, that in this dispensation of

fatherly corrections amongst his children, he ever, out of his unsearchable, merciful wisdom, singles out those which are the fittest for their spiritual good. And therefore, let us ever humbly and thankfully submit, and wholly refer ourselves to the *sweet and wise* disposing of our most loving Father, who knows best what is best for us in such cases, both in regard of his service and our sufferings, his glory and our gain, what we are able to bear; how he hath furnished us before-hand with spiritual strength to go through temptations and troubles; what spiritual physic is most quick, and operative, and fitted for the prevention, cure, and recovery of our sicknesses; how wisely to proportion, in respect of measure, time, and working; and when his hand is heavy upon us in one kind, tenderly to take care that we be not opprest with other distresses also.

It may be, our only *wise* God purposeth to exercise us extraordinarily with spiritual conflicts, and troubles of conscience; and therefore doth mercifully give us more prosperity and comfort in our outward state. Or, perhaps, to afflict us with a variety of worldly crosses, and therefore doth sweetly give us more peace and comfort in our own hearts. Or, it may be, he means to make us eminent objects of disgrace, reproach, and slander in the world; and even from those who *sit in the gate*, for our forwardness of zeal; and therefore, out of a gracious tender-heartedness, gives us both more calmness in conscience, and contentment in outward things. Or, perhaps, he may lay all these upon us; suffer us to be tried with ill tongues, with troubles without, and terrors within;—why then, undoubtedly, “his grace shall be sufficient for us:” so wise and so merciful is our blessed God. Only,

1. Let us take heed (though in our own apprehensions and misdeeming we may pretend never so plausibly,) that we never prescribe unto him how, in what kind, or measure, he should afflict us.
2. That we never ward, or put off any blow from his own heavenly hand, men, or creatures, with the wound of conscience, never decline any

ill by ill means. 3. That we learn and labour to profit by, and make the right use of, all his corrections. 4. And that we ever magnify the glory of his mercy and wisdom in sparing us any way; his tender-hearted observation where we are weakest, and not so able to bear his severer visitations; but especially that he ever pitches upon that affliction which doth our souls most good, and serves most punctually to procure and promote the soundness and flourishing of our spiritual state.

Well, then, since our most holy God deals thus with all that are not damned,—to wit, sorts out unto them those several crosses and corrections, which, out of his unsearchable wisdom, and the spiritual necessity of their souls, he sees most fit to keep them humble and obedient: take thou up in good part this cross of thine, while it pleaseth God to exercise thee with it as thy portion. Others, though free from this, yet have their proper portion; and that perhaps in a bitterer cup, and from a more smarting rod. It may be, it goes well with thee in other respects; in which, wert thou crossed, the physic would not take, nor work so kindly. Our all-wise, heavenly Physician knows this dreadful dart will only do it. Who knows whether, if thou wert not haunted with these foul furies, I mean furious injections of the devil, thou mightest not grow worldly, lukewarm, passionate, proud, secure, or something which God would not have thee, and would be infinitely for thy hurt. Be thou therefore patient under them, humbled by them, make a holy and profitable use of them, comfort thyself in them by these considerations here recommended, and learn how to behave thyself about them by the following counsels:—

4. As at their first approach thou oughtest to stir up and confirm thy heart, to improve the strength of all the powers of thy soul, to make a mighty and forcible resistance,—lifting up at the same instant thy heart in a bitter complaint against the cruelty and malice of the adversary,—a strong cry for the rebuking of him, with extreme

detestation of all such devilish filth ; so take heed that thou never revolve in thy mind, or muse upon those his blasphemous temptations. But say, with Luther, A kite or cormorant may fly over my house, but sure shall never roost there. Or, as another, A ravenous and hateful bird may begin to build a nest in mine harbour, I cannot hinder it ; but I will never fail to pull it down as often as she begins. The devil will inject, whether thou wilt or not ; but resolve to suffer them by no means to have any rest in thine imagination. And take thou this advice, which hath proved sovereign and helpful to beat back and banish these temptations. Suppose thou art a minister : The mind of every man of God, “instructed to the kingdom of heaven,” is, as I suppose, still digging in the rich mines of Divine truth, diving into the great mystery of Christ, ever discoursing, or doing something for the advancement of the work of the Lord. Now, then, upon the first proposal of these monstrous and hideous thoughts, presently divert and resort to the hardest of all those irons thou hast in the fire, if I may so speak, and that which hath need of most hammering ; I mean, to the most difficult and weighty points of all those several spiritual businesses thou hast laid in thy mind, and single out that particular which did most puzzle and perplex thy understanding. And when the strength of thy whole soul is employed about them, not only other impertinent wanderings, but these idle and irksome injections also will more easily vanish, and be gone. Let others also proportionably, upon such occasions, besides other helps, have recourse to the most troublesome part of their honest employments.

5. In temptations of this nature, never set thyself to dispute with the devil ; he is an old sophister, of about 5000 years standing in the school of hideous temptations and hellish policies, and thou art but a simple novice. He hath many *methods*, *devices*, and *depths*, which thy shallow forecast cannot possibly fathom. Direct opposition, by reasons and replies, stirreth up the outrageous

blasphemer to grow more furious. And hereby we give him greater advantage—more matter of molestation and mischief—and may plunge ourselves into a maze of horror and confused distractions. Our blessed Captain, Christ Jesus, may be a pattern for us in this point. When he was tempted “to fall down and worship” satan, he reasoneth not the case, but repels him with vehement, extraordinary detestation and disdain: Begone! satan. It will therefore be our best wisdom, at such a time, to turn from him: and as Hezekiah spread Sennacherib’s blasphemous letter, so to lay open his fury, before the Lord; crying mightily unto him, and entreating him, even for his own honour’s sake, to vindicate the purity of his great Majesty, and excellency of his unspotted glory, from this horrible villany of his vilest creature; that he would cast it, as dung, upon the tempter’s face; and in the passion and blood of Christ, free fully, and for ever, our poor souls, trembling under the hideousness of his malice and cruelty, from the guilt, stain, terror, and assault of all such abhorred and prodigious blasphemies.

In that other terrible temptation also to *self-murder*, many much wrong themselves this way. In managing this fiery dart, the adversary deals by way of argument too, and presses reasons, such as they are, upon the tempted; sometimes extremely absurd, especially if the party be something more simple and ignorant; sometimes exceedingly subtile, if he be of better understanding and capacity. As thus: “It is soon done, and the pain quickly past. Thou art like thus to languish, and lie in misery all thy life long. The longer thou livest, the larger will be the score of thy sins, and so thy torments in hell more horrible. Do what thou canst, thou wilt be damned, when all is done.” Now in this case, if thou debate the matter with the devil, and begin to confer, thou wilt probably be more and more confounded, and entangled with inextricable astonishments, and in danger to be utterly undone. But, according to the practice of thy Lord and Master, who is *afflicted in all thy afflictions*,

and ever stands by thee as a victorious commander and conqueror in all such assaults,—first abominate and beat back this base and bloody motion, crying, with infinite indignation and loathing, Avaunt! satan: and then immediately lay hold on the sword of the Spirit, and keep him at the point of it; and then, assuredly, all the devils in hell cannot hurt thee. Tell him, that against his vile and villanous suggestion, and all the subtilties and sophistry with which he seconds it, this is thy only answer, even the precise, holy, and everlasting countermand of his and thy Creator, the mighty Lord of heaven and earth, “Thou shalt not kill.” Now if it be a crimson and crying sin to kill another, and fasteneth such a deep and inexpressible stain upon the face of the whole kingdom, that it cannot be razed out *but by the blood of him that shed it*; how execrable and heinous then is this; and what depth of hell and height of horror doth that abhorred miscreant deserve who destroys himself? For the rule of charity whereby we love one another, is proportioned by that charity whereby a man loves himself. If the devil be able to disannul the most absolute, perfect, and just law of the *Most High*; if the *prince of darkness* can reverse this law of the *Father of Lights*, “Thou shalt not murder;” thou mayst well say, thou wilt then think of another answer. But, till that be, which is impossible ever to come to pass, thou wilt rather lie in the miseries of hell upon earth, than, breaking God’s blessed law, go down into the grave in a bloody coffin, made by thy own hands, only at the devil’s bidding. Can this madness ever be matched, for a man, besides severing the soul from his body before the time, by a more heinous and unnatural villany than murdering of his own father, (for every man is naturally next unto himself,) and sending it suddenly, all gore-blood, by becoming his own butcher and hangman, unto the dreadful tribunal of the all-powerful God,—the most certain and severe revenger of all bloodshed? to bring also abundance of unnecessary shame, grief, and hopeless mourn-

ing upon his friends, kindred, wife, children, parents ;— a reproachful stain and brand upon his house, name, and posterity ; and that merely at the instance of the *arch-murderer*, his mortal and immortal enemy,—against sense, reason, nature, religion, scripture, God's direct command to the contrary,—even heathen philosophy,—heaven and earth ?

6. Avoid idleness, solitariness, and too much secrecy ; three main advantages for the adversary, which he watchfully apprehending, and improving industriously, works a world of mischief upon afflicted souls. Idleness lays a man open to all hellish snares and temptations ; makes the heart, like unmanured ground, fit for nothing but the rankest weeds. Solitariness, besides its native property and power to increase melancholy, and aggravate fears, doth, in this case, more than in any other, bring an heavy woe. “Woe to him that is alone ;” for if he fall, “he hath not another to help him up.” He may there be surprised and foiled before he get into such company as might have supported him in the temptation. Secrecy and concealment may cause the wound of a terrified conscience to bleed inwardly, rankle, fester, and grow desperate ; whereas seasonable discovery might have cured it. Horror, arising from the apprehension of such uncouth and monstrous thoughts, kept close dammed up in the man's own breast, may swell so high, that the poor soul may be in great danger of being overwhelmed by it ; which, had it eased and emptied itself into some holy and faithful bosom, might, by discreet counsel, by little and little, have dried up quite.

I knew a person who kept close in his bosom this temptation of blasphemy the space of about twenty years. All which while the devil did tyrannize extremely, and keep him in continual terror. He thought there never was a man that had such vile and prodigious thoughts as he ; and if the world knew what they were, he should be abhorred as a monster, and the loathsome creature upon earth. And hereupon, many a time when

he apprehended any opportunity, or had any means offered to make himself away, he was tempted thereunto principally upon this ground, That it was a pity such an horrible blasphemer should any longer breathe. But at last, hearing the nature, manner, and remedy of such hideous injections discovered by the ministry, afterward privately informing himself further, and more fully, from God's messenger, he was happily taken off the rack for the time to come, and most wonderfully refreshed. And therefore take heed of keeping the devil's counsel. The tempted in this kind may do well to be still conversant in religious duties, honest works of their lawful callings, company of experienced soul-physicians, or one or other comfortable employment.

7. Settle in thy heart a peremptory, impregnable resolution never to entertain any conceit of that great majesty of the most holy and ever-blessed Trinity, but such only as is revealed in God's book. Whatsoever is objected by carnal reason to the contrary, or injected by the devil, reject as cursed, false, and execrable. And therefore, when that hellish Nimrod shall at any time chase thine affrighted soul with these blasphemous hell-hounds, be sure ever to take sanctuary in the Oracles of God, and keep thee close and safe under this covert. Whatsoever is not comprehended within the confines of that sacred pale warranted by holy writ, the sovereign touchstone of all heavenly truth, let it be abhorred, and retorted upon the tempter. And for further help herein, when thou findest thyself followed with the violent and incessant incursions of this furious folly, call often and seriously to mind that accursed brand, which the book of God hath set upon the adversary, that he is the "father of lies;" and let that still enforce a more resolute rejection and contempt of whatsoever comes from him. Let him suggest hideous conceits of thy dearest Lord, yet God infinitely forbid that this should cause any diminution at all of thy lowliest, most reverent adoring of so great a God. And whensoever that most implacable enemy to God's glory,

and the good of his children, shall go about to pervert, by his blasphemous injections, thy sober conceptions of the thrice-glorious and ever-blessed Deity, trample upon his hellish spite; appeal unto God's righteous throne, with protestation of thine innocence; condemning them to the pit of hell in thy judgment; and hating them, not without horror, from the very heart; and so, truly resisting them, cry mightily unto God for pardon, whereinsoever thou shalt fail about them, and for power against them; and then possess thy humble soul in patience and peace.

8. Being humbled by them, making an holy use of them; perusing and applying the *considerations and counsels* in hand for comfort in them, and conquest over them; do not by any means continue to afflict and torture thy spirit about them: let them now pass away. Abandon them with an holy detestation, without any dismayedness and terror; as most unworthy of being any longer taken to heart, much more of such anxiety and trouble as to terrify and disable thee for a cheerful discharge of thy calling. Divines hold even godly sorrow unseasonable, when it unfitteth the body or mind for good duties. Let not then these hellish distractions dishearten thee. Least of all, let them so prevail as to fill thine heart with horror, and doubting whether such monstrous injections be incident to a state of salvation; and so put thee into a habit of heavy walking and secret sadness, by questioning the soundness of thy conversion; the procurement of which miseries and molestations is the adversary's only aim. For so immeasurably malicious is he, that if he cannot plunge thee into everlasting flames in the world to come, yet will he labour to keep thee upon the rack, and in as much terror as he can, all thy life long. Suffer then this advice to sink seriously into thy heart. Being rightly informed and directed about them, let them no longer astonish thy spirit, hurt thy heart, or hinder thee in any duty to God or man; or in an humble, comfortable, and confident walking with thy God, as

thou art wont ; or of thy former sweet communion with Jesus Christ. And the rather, because, 1. It is the tempter's earnest end to put these vexing perplexities upon thee. 2. The more thou art troubled with them, the more violently will he press them upon thee. 3. They are not thine, but his sins : he alone must answer for them at that great and last day : his malicious madness being of such a prodigious nature as is only fit for a devil. For that he may trouble thee temporally, he mightily aggravates his own eternal torment.

In the next place, let me tender unto thee an antidote, which hath been found sovereign and successful this way, and which is this : Let the tempted Christian labour to extract, by the blessings of God, some spiritual good out of the horrible hell of these most hateful, abominable, blasphemous suggestions. And if Satan once see that thou suckest honey out of his poison, medicine out of his malice, he will have no heart to go on ; no courage or content to continue his temptation.

Take it in the sense, if not in the same words, without any variation or enlargement, as it hath been successfully applied by those that have laboured under such perplexing circumstances. Spiteful and malicious fiend ! cursed enemy to heaven and earth ! by the mercies of God, thou shalt not hurt me hereby. Thy base injections, tending to the dishonour of my God and Christ, shall make me,

“ 1. More hate thy infinitely hateful and revengeful malice, against that thrice-glorious and ever-blessed majesty.

“ 2. With more feeling and dearness, adore and love the glory of my God and my Redeemer. For the more excessive and endless I feel thy spite against him, the more I know is his excellency and worth.

“ 3. To pray oftener, and more fervently, that my God would rebuke thee, and cast this extreme malice of thine upon thine own face.

“ 4. To be still more humbled under the hand of my mighty Lord, because I cannot be more humbled, and

with more resolution and abhorrence abominate and abandon such hellish blasphemies of thine, (for I am sure they are none of mine,) into the bottom of that darkest dungeon.

“ 5. To take up a strong argument and answer against another of thy cursed injections, tending to Atheism. Because I most plainly and palpably feel thee, an invisible spirit, casting into my imagination such horrid thoughts, which cannot possibly spring from any power of mine own soul: I know thereby, and assure myself that there is also an infinite, most wise, and glorious Spirit, which created both me and thee, who will in due time chain thee up for ever, in the pit of hell; and bring me, by the blessed merit of his only Son, into the bosom of his own glory.

“ 6. To confirm mine own heart with stronger assurance that I undoubtedly belong unto God. For thou well knowest, and so doth mine own soul, that thou never troubledst me with these blasphemous thoughts while I lay dead in sin. Then thou, being the strong man, possessedst me wholly, and all was quiet; but being rescued by a mightier than thou, thou followest me with these yellings of that infernal pit.

“ 7 To take notice of some special corruption, passion, or spiritual distemper, in one kind or other, over which I have not watched enough. For I am persuaded my God, out of his merciful goodness, intends some such good unto my soul by enlarging thy chain, and suffering thee at this time to afflict me in this manner. I have not been so sensible of thy other temptations, far more ensnaring, though not so terrifying; and therefore my gracious Lord may suffer this, that I may be thoroughly advertised what an adversary I have, and more quickened to an universal watchfulness against all thy *methods*, *devices*, and *depths*. Something hath too often stolen my heart from that full attention to holy duties, which was due, and that even upon the Lord's-day. And I can now remember that I have not watched over the many wan-

derings of my imagination ; but given so far way unto them, that they have justly brought upon me an uncomfortable deadness, barrenness, and indisposition in the use of the ordinances : and therefore, in great mercy, the most wise God goes now graciously about to correct and mortify the vanity, worldliness, distractions, and mis-employment of my thoughts, even by the terrors of these thy hellish injections. And by the help of God, I will follow the meaning and conduct of his holy hand for a right use of them, and attaining that happy end which he doth so mercifully intend.

“ 8. To gather skill, experience, and dexterity, for the reviving of others hereafter, hanging down the head, and maliciously haunted in the same kind,—by discovering unto them thy malice, the sovereign methods I have met with, and the good I gained to my soul thereby, through the help of that Almighty Hand, which can turn the darkest midnight into the brightest morning.

“ Methinks this heaven, which by Divine blessing I extract out of thy hell,—this healing virtue, which I draw from thy vilest venom,—this spiritual good, which I gather from thy devilish spite, should make thee weary of this way. I trust in my God it will shortly cause thee to cast away this weapon, and quit the field quite. And who would not think, were not the incredible depth of thy malice and madness, equally unfathomable, but that thou shouldst the rather cease ; because these suggestions to me are but crosses and corrections, but in thee most outrageous and execrable blasphemies ; which will mightily hereafter add to the heaviness of thine everlasting chains of darkness and damnation “at the judgment of the great day.”

A TREATISE  
CONCERNING  
THE WORD OF GOD.

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PSALM CXIX. 105.

*Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto  
my path.*

OF all other parts of the Holy Bible, this book of the Psalms is filled with the greatest plenty and variety of precious lessons and instructions unto eternal life. The choice and flower of all things profitable for the right course of a Christian life, is therein briefly contained. In them we may be acquainted with the majesty and mysteries of God; with the sufferings of Christ; with the unfeigned repentance, unwearied patience, spiritual wisdom, and wonderful courage of the godly man. In them we behold the terrors of wrath, and the anguishes of an afflicted conscience, the comforts of grace and great deliverances, the wonderful works of Providence over this world, and the promised joys of that which is to come. In a word, all good necessary to be either known or done, or had, is plentifully, as out of a rich

treasury, revealed and offered unto us in these heavenly songs of David. But above all, this 119th Psalm is, as it were, a precious jewel, or clear crystal; wherein we may see the right temper and state of true godliness; the marks and properties of all true worshippers of God; the very lively anatomy and laying open of a good and gracious soul.

This whole Psalm doth consist of twenty-two parts, even just so many as there are letters in the Hebrew alphabet; and every portion containeth in it eight verses; and every verse of every portion begins with the same Hebrew letter. Which special and extraordinary penning and disposing of the Psalm declares, 1. The diligent intention of mind, and careful meditation of the author, in the framing and composing of it. 2. The worth of the matter contained in it; in that it pleased the Spirit of God to deliver it in choice and special order. 3. A desire and purpose, that it might more easily be learned by heart; and often and earnestly considered. This part, which we have now in hand, is the fourteenth; and contains in it many gracious lessons for our instruction in heavenly things, proposed unto us out of the practice and carriage of David, that holy prophet and man of God.

In the thirteenth portion David had delivered especially two things. First, How by his love, reading, study, and meditation in God's Word, he had attained most excellent knowledge, wisdom and understanding; so that thereby he was become *far more wise than his enemies*; that is, than Saul, and all his politic courtiers and counsellors of state. He had *more understanding than his teachers*, than the great doctors and rabbins; notwithstanding their deep learning. He understood more than the grave and ancient men; notwithstanding the worldly wisdom and great experience they had gathered in many years. Where, by the way, take this lesson. Not all the wit or policy, nor all the learning in the world, or worldly wisdom, can make a man truly wise, (that is,

wise unto salvation,) but a powerful and operative knowledge, out of the holy Word of God. All other wisdom doth only provide for the body; for a temporal happiness in this life; for a few (and those but evil) days, and leaves the soul in a sinful and wretched estate; shortly, in the day of visitation, to be overtaken and fearfully confounded with strange astonishments, horrors, and despair; and hereafter wofully to be tormented in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. But wisdom, out of the Word of God, doth so furnish a man's soul with grace, and all holy virtues, that in despite of all creatures, he may live comfortably in this vale of tears, and in endless joys in the world to come. Now, (I pray you,) tell me, which is the truly wise man? he, that for an inch of time makes much of his wretched body, that must shortly rot in the grave, and, in the mean time, lets his immortal soul, that can never die, sink into the dungeon of everlasting misery? Or he, who, by taking sound and saving counsel and direction out of the Word of God, and howsoever he be hated and neglected of this vain world, yet yielding cheerful and constant obedience thereunto, provides unspeakable comfort, rest, and blessedness, both for body and soul, through all eternity?

In the four last verses of the former portion, David sets down the fruit, use, and benefit, which sprung from his Divine knowledge. It sweetened his heart with much comfort, and cheered him with *joy unspeakable and glorious*, amidst all crosses; bridled and restrained him *from every evil way*; kept and preserved him in the paths of righteousness; and bred in him a hatred of the ways of error, falsehood, and hypocrisy. Where, by the way, I would give you this other lesson: We must be sure, that we draw our knowledge in God's Word into practice, action, and exercise; otherwise, it will not only be unprofitable and unfruitful unto us, but indeed bring upon us a more fearful condemnation. For, "He that knows his Master's will, and doth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes," Luke xii. 47 All our knowledge is

vain, except by the power of it our affections be sanctified, our words seasoned with grace, our actions and conversations guided with spiritual wisdom and unfeigned sincerity.

After David had thus, in the former portion, laid down unto us, and confessed what excellent knowledge he had got out of the Word of God, and the precious fruit and benefit he had reaped and enjoyed by it; now, in the first verse of this present portion, he makes, as it were, a protestation; that he was enlightened and led in all his ways only by this holy Word of God, as by a light or lantern. The brightness whereof did not only bring him into the ways of righteousness; but did also guide him in all the particulars of his life and actions; in all the passages of his special calling: for he saith, “Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet:” that is, whereby I see the way to heaven, and the narrow path through the kingdom of grace; “and a light unto my paths:” that is, a guide to direct me in every particular step, at every turning, that so I may keep a straight course, and the ready way to the kingdom of glory.

That David had thus resigned up himself to be guided and governed by the glorious light of God’s holy Word, appears in the verses following. First, In ver. 106, by a solemn oath and sacred resolution to keep God’s righteous judgments, and an unfeigned purpose to perform the same; “I have sworn, and will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.” Secondly, In ver. 107, by his patience, and suffering of wrongs, disgraces, and afflictions, which the wicked and profane world heaped upon him, for his profession of holiness and sincerity. For, except he had loved and followed the light of Divine truth, whensoever the fire of persecution and tribulation, because of the Word, had been kindled against him, he had shrunk back and fallen away: “I am afflicted very much, quicken me, O Lord, according to thy word.” Thirdly, In ver. 108, by the offerings of his mouth, and calves of his lips; that is, the spiritual

sacrifices of prayers and thanksgivings, and gracious vows for God's service, which, with a fervent spirit, and earnest desire of acceptance, he continually offered unto the Lord: "O Lord, I beseech thee, accept the free-will offerings of my mouth, and teach me thy judgments." Fourthly, In ver. 109, 110, by his adhering to the Word of God, though he was strongly encompassed with snares, with dangers, and with death itself; "His soul was continually in his hand:" that is, that he was ready and resolved every hour, rather to part with life, than with a good conscience; to shed his blood, rather than to forsake the truth of God. "My soul is continually in my hand, yet I do not forget thy law. The wicked have laid a snare for me, yet I erred not from thy precepts." In the two last verses, upon the former reasons he concludes the point: that his heart and affections dearly embraced God's blessed Word, as a most rich and lasting inheritance; and, that he bent all the powers of his soul, to follow the light thereof even unto the end. "Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever, for they are the rejoicing of my heart. I have inclined my heart to perform thy statutes alway, even to the end." Thus you see in general the meaning of this portion.

Now I come to a more particular consideration of every verse in order; and thence to gather such doctrines as may best instruct us in the way to heaven. David tells us, in the first verse, that God's "Word is a lantern to his feet, and a light unto his paths:" which, that you may better understand, I will explain unto you the several terms. The Word may be taken three ways. 1. For the substantial Word of God, the second person in the Trinity, John i. 1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God." 2. It may be taken for the written Word, as it only strikes the ear, and informs the understanding; but is not conveyed into the heart by the powerful assistance of God's Spirit. And so the Word is heard and understood by many, but returns unfruitful. 3. It may be taken for the effectual Word, as

it is "the power of God unto salvation;" as it is rightly understood, applied to the heart and conscience, possessed of the thoughts and affections, and practised in the life and conversation. This Word, thus applied by the Spirit of God, was a light unto David's steps; and so is a guide unto the paths of all true Christians, to the world's end.

That you may understand how the Word is a light, you must consider, 1. That Christ is called light, John i. 4. The ministers are called the light of the world, Matt. v. 14. The faithful are lights, Phil. ii. 15, 16. "The way of the righteous," (saith Solomon, Prov. iv. 18,) "shineth as the light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." The Word of God is called a light: as in this place. But first, Christ is light of himself, and originally; he is the everlasting spring of all the light of grace and glory, both in heaven and earth. He is called, "The Sun of Righteousness." The sun, you know, hath his light rooted in his own fair body, and receives that from none other; and with that he enlightens the moon, the planets, the air, the earth, and all the world: even so the blessed Son of God, "the Sun of Righteousness," hath in himself, and from himself, the light of all wisdom and knowledge, mercy and comfort; and from him floweth whatsoever light of glory is revealed unto his blessed saints and angels in heaven, or whatsoever light of grace is shed into the hearts of his sons and servants upon earth.

2. The preachers of the Word are ministers and messengers of this light ministerially. They are as the stars, and so they are called, Rev. i. 20; even such stars as receive all their light from "the Sun of Righteousness," Christ Jesus, and either do or should convey and cast their borrowed beams upon the earthly, cold, and darksome hearts of the people of God, that they may "turn them from darkness to light, from the power of satan unto God," Acts xxvi. 18.

3. The Word is light instrumentally; which, being powerfully sanctified unto us for our salvation, and being holden out unto us by a lively ministry,

is as a candle or torch, to guide us through the darkness of this world unto our eternal rest. 4. Lastly. The faithful are lights, as they receive this light, 1st. Into their understandings; whereby they see the wonders of God's law, the secrets of his kingdom, and the great mystery of godliness, and the way to heaven. 2dly. Into their consciences; whereby they have their sinful miserable state by nature discovered unto them, and the way to Christ for remedy and salvation. 3dly. Into their affections; whereby they are enkindled with zeal for God's truth, honour, and service. 4thly. Into their actions and conversation; whereby "they shine as lights in the world, amidst a crooked generation," Phil. ii. 15. And, after the Sun of Righteousness is once risen in their hearts, like the sun in the firmament, they shine more and more, in all holy virtues, "unto the perfect day," until they reach the height of heaven, and the full glory of the saints of God.

By *feet* is meant his mind and understanding; his affections, thoughts, actions; his whole life, all his ways. All these in David, were guided by the light of God's Word. Lastly. By *paths* are meant every particular step; every turning and narrow passage in his special calling. For this light, the Word of God, doth not only "guide a man's feet into the way of peace," and put him into the right way to heaven; but also goes along with him, enlightens and directs every step, that his feet do not slide. It so informs him with spiritual wisdom, that he lays hold on every occasion for the glorifying of God; describes every little sin, and appearance of evil; disposeth every circumstance in his actions with a good conscience, and warrant out of God's Word. This then is the meaning of this verse. David had the Word of God working powerfully upon his soul, as a light: that is, as a lamp is to the life and safety of the body, in dark and dangerous places, so was this light to the life and salvation of David's soul, in the darkness of this world, and shadow

of death : “To guide his feet and paths ;” that is, his mind, affections, thoughts, actions ; his whole life, all his ways, and every particular step and passage thereof.

This verse being thus understood, let us now gather some doctrines for our instruction. The first shall be this : No man can find the way to heaven, or walk in the paths of righteousness, through the kingdom of grace, unto the kingdom of glory, except he be enlightened, informed, and instructed in the holy Word of God. The second shall be this : The Word of God is as a light, not only to guide us into the way to heaven, and instruct us into our general calling of Christianity ; but also to lead us along in a course of godliness, and to direct us in our special calling. I will first follow the former doctrine ; which, in few words, I thus propose unto you : No man can at first find the entrance, or afterwards be guided in the way to heaven, except he be enlightened and led along by the holy Word of God. The reasons of this doctrine may be these which follow :

The first may be taken from the insufficiency of all other means to bring us to heaven : as, 1. All the greatest learning and deepest knowledge in the world will stand us in little stead in this business : otherwise, it had gone well with many ancient heathens and philosophers of old, who fathomed as deep, and reached as high in the depths and mysteries of all human learning and knowledge, as the light of reason could possibly bring them ; and yet they were utterly strangers to the life of grace, and “without God in the world.” When they “professed themselves to be wise, they became fools,” Rom. i. 22. They were puffed up with a little vain-glorious knowledge, here upon earth, and got them a name amongst men. But, alas ! what was this ? When, for the want of Divine truth, they lost their souls in another world, and their names never came into the book of life. “Where is the wise ?” (saith Paul in another place,) “Where is the scribe ? Where is the disputer of this world ?” As

if he had said, All the knowledge of the greatest doctors and learnedest rabbins in the world, without grace, vanisheth into nothing ; into vain-glory, emptiness, and air ; nay, casts them, with greater horror and confusion, into the pit of hell. "Every man," (saith Jeremiah,) "is a beast by his own knowledge," Jer. x. 14, except, besides all other knowledge, he be enlightened from above, and have that Divine knowledge sanctified unto him.

2. Worldly wisdom and policy is so far from making men wise unto salvation, that it is not only foolishness with God, but it doth strongly set itself, and is at enmity against God. Therefore, saith God, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will cast away the understanding of the prudent," 1 Cor. i. 19. Ahitophel was so wise, even in the affairs of kingdoms and business of state, that "the counsel which he counselled in those days, was like as if one had asked counsel at the oracle of God ;" and yet all this great wisdom in the end terminated in extreme folly. For, upon a little disgrace in the world, "He saddled his ass, and went home unto his city, and put his household in order, and hanged himself," 2 Sam. xvi. 23, xvii. 23. Although the end of all worldly wisdom be not so shameful in the eye of the world, yet undoubtedly it is most miserable in the world to come, except their wisdom be sanctified by the light of God's Word. Carnal wisdom can neither preserve a man from death, nor prepare him to die blessedly ; it cannot stay his life from going, neither can it stop the curse from coming ; it cannot deliver him from damnation in the world to come, but rather increaseth the grievousness of his punishment. For in this life it kept possession against heavenly wisdom : it made him incapable of all good instructions : it made him impatient of any rebuke, and held him in ignorance and disobedience all his life.

3. No good meanings or intentions, without knowledge and warrant in the Word of God, will ever serve

our turn for salvation ; nay, indeed they are abominable in God's sight, howsoever thousands deceive themselves in this point. Uzzah had a good meaning, when he put his hand to the ark of God, and held it ; for the oxen shook it : but, notwithstanding, the Lord was very wroth with Uzzah, and smote him in the same place, and there he died. James and John had good meanings when they called for fire from heaven to consume the Samaritans, that would not entertain Christ ; but Jesus rebuked them, and told them, " they knew not what spirit they were of." Saul had a good meaning when he spared Agag, and the best of the sheep and of the oxen to sacrifice them unto the Lord ; but, notwithstanding, Samuel tells him, that " he had done wickedly in the sight of the Lord, and that the Lord had rent the kingdom of Israel from him that day." Peter had a good meaning when he would not suffer Christ to wash his feet ; but Jesus answered him, and said, " If I wash thee not, thou shalt have no part with me." Good meanings then are wicked missings of the true service of God, except they be guided by knowledge and ground out of the Book of God. Let no man then tell of his good meaning, if he be ignorant respecting the will and Word of God : for certainly it will never serve the turn ; it will never hold out in the day of Christ Jesus.

4. No will-worship, or will-service, no voluntary religion, as the apostle calls it, Col. ii. 23, which is framed out of a man's own brain, without ground or warrant in the Book of God, though it be performed with never so glorious a shew of zeal, will be any way available for our eternal happiness : nay, indeed, it is most odious in the eyes of God, and ever liable to a very high degree of his vengeance. The Papists whip themselves, vow continence, perpetual poverty, and regular obedience ; and yet is their profession and practice both bloody and idolatrous. When the Jews worshipped God after the devised fashions of the Gentiles, though their meaning was to worship nothing but God, yet the text saith,

“they worshipped devils,” Deut. xxxii. 17. And God there protests, that therefore “a fire was kindled in his wrath, that should burn unto the bottom of hell, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains.” So hated of Almighty God is all service and worship devised by the wit of man, without warrant in the Word of God.

5. Lastly, Not the Word of God itself in the letter, without the spiritual meaning, and the finger of God’s Spirit to apply it powerfully to our souls, is able to bring us into the light of grace. This appears in Nicodemus, who was a great doctor in the law, “a master and teacher in Israel;” yet was a very infant and idiot in the power of grace, and mystery of godliness. For all his learning in the letter of the law, he had not yet made one step towards heaven; for he was not only ignorant of, but had a very absurd and gross conceit of, the new birth, which is the very first entrance into the kingdom of grace. Thus you see, there can no other means be named; not all human knowledge, nor worldly wisdom, nor good meanings, nor will-worship, nor the Word itself in the letter, which can lead us into the ways of righteousness, or bring us unto heaven, but only the light of God’s holy Word, holden out unto us by a profitable ministry, and the power of the Spirit.

A second reason of my doctrine may be this: no man can ever see the kingdom of God, except he be born again; except he become a new creature, a new man, as is plain in Christ’s words unto Nicodemus. For our new birth is the necessary passage from nature to grace. It is that whereby we are (*ἁγιασμένοι*, 1 Cor. vi. 11,) *sanctified* and *set apart* unto God, from the sinful corruption of our natural birth, and the evil fruits thereof, to serve God in body, soul, and spirit. Now this new birth must necessarily spring from the *immortal seed of the Word of God*, 1 Pet. i. 23. It is the seed of our new birth, of salvation and immortality. And you may as well look for corn to grow up in your fields without sowing, as look for grace to grow up in your hearts, or to reap the

fruit of holiness, everlasting life, except this immortal seed, the Word of God, be first cast into the furrows of your hearts, and be there received with reverence and attention, and nourished with prayer and meditation. Hence it is, that God's Word is called, "The word of salvation," Acts xiii. 26; "The word of grace," Acts xiv. 3; "The word of life," Phil. ii. 16; "The power of God unto salvation," Rom. i. 16. For there is no power of grace, or spiritual life, to be had ordinarily upon earth, or salvation to be hoped for in heaven; except a man be enlightened with the knowledge, and enlivened with the power of the holy Word of God. There is no entering into the kingdom of God, except a man be new born. And there is no new birth, without the immortal seed, the Word of God. And, therefore, without knowledge and direction in the Word of God, no salvation.

The third reason of my doctrine is this: the Word of God only hath the power to search into and to sanctify the whole man, even to the inmost thoughts of the heart. All the devices and imaginations of man's heart, lie without the walk of human justice and censure; no word or writing of man is able to bridle them, or bring them within compass. No law of nature, or nations, can affright or restrain the freedom and wanderings of thoughts: only the Word of God can search and sanctify them. "The weapons of our warfare (saith Paul,) are not carnal, but mighty through God to cast down strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought unto the obedience of Christ," 2 Cor. x. 4, 5.

Thus you have this first doctrine plainly proved and confirmed unto you: and now I come unto the use thereof. This doctrine may serve for admonition to all those, who, by the light of God's Word, have already found and are entered into the way to heaven; that they would suffer themselves with humility, obedience, and

constancy, to be led along in a course of sanctification, by the holy guidance and direction thereof; that they would shine daily more and more in all Christian virtues, exercises, and duties. For it is the property of all those, who are new-born by the immortal seed of the Word and the Spirit of grace, to long after and earnestly “desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby” in knowledge, comfort, and new obedience. Look to it then, I beseech you; whosoever hath already tasted of the good Word of God, and received into his soul some glimpses of heavenly light; let him follow hard “towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” Let him set his best desires, affections, and endeavours, to grow in all holy knowledge, in the light of God’s Word, and cheerful obedience unto the same. For it is a special note and mark of a man, that is truly religious, to go forward and increase in grace and understanding. He must be like the sun, which, rising in the east, enlargeth his glorious light and heat, until he reach the height of heaven. But, as one well observes, the true Christian must not be like Hezekiah’s sun, which went backward. If a man fall away from good beginnings, he adds weight unto the wrath of God, and doubles his damnation. He must not be like Joshua’s sun, that stood still. It is so far to heaven, and the way so narrow, so rough, and full of dangers and difficulties, that he who stands at a stay will come short. The Bridegroom will be entered in, and the gate shut, before he come. And he that endeavours not to be better, will, by little and little, grow worse, and at length become stark naught. He therefore must be like David’s sun, that great and glorious giant of the heavens, “that like a bridegroom comes out of his chamber, and as a champion rejoiceth to run his race.” One grace in God’s child begets another; and one holy action, performed with sincerity of heart, doth inflame his affections with love and zeal, with courage and resolution, to undertake more, and to go

through with all the affairs of God. For he alone knows the invaluable worth of heavenly jewels; and therefore is ravished with their beauty, and grows insatiable in his desires and longings after them. He is still toiling and labouring in the trade of Christianity, for more gain of grace, increase of comfort, and further assurance of the joys of heaven. If then you would be assured that you are in the way of happiness, be sure to be led on by the light of the Word, in all heavenly knowledge, spiritual wisdom, and holy obedience.

Another use of this doctrine is for instruction to all; whether they be natural or spiritual, ignorant or instructed in the Word of God, that they make it their chief care zealously and constantly to hear, attend, and understand the holy Word of God; and to be guided by the light thereof in all the passages of their life and conversation. And in this point, I will 1. Lay down unto you certain motives, that may induce you thereunto. 2. Some cautions to forewarn you of lets and temptations that may withdraw you therefrom. 3. And, lastly, give some needful instructions for your right carriage therein.

One motive to stir us up to a reverent attention in hearing the Word of God, to a love of the heavenly knowledge therein contained, and a sincere practice of it in our lives and conversations, may be this: the Word of God is, as it were, *an epistle or letter*, (as one of the fathers calls it,) *written from God Almighty* unto us miserable men; published by his own Son; sealed by his Spirit; witnessed by his angels; conveyed unto us by his church, *the pillar and ground of truth*; confirmed with the blood of millions of martyrs; which hath already brought thousands of souls to heaven, and fills every heart that understands it, and is wholly guided by it, with light and life, with grace and salvation. Now let us imagine a man to have a letter sent unto him but by an earthly king, wherein he should have a pardon granted him for some capital crime, by which he was liable to a

terrible kind of death; or wherein he should be forewarned of some imminent danger hanging over his head, and ready every hour to fall upon him; or, wherein he should have assured and confirmed unto him, under the king's seal, some rich donation or great lordship:—I say, if a man should but receive a letter from some potentate upon earth, wherein any of these favours should be conveyed unto him, how reverently would he receive it? How thankfully would he accept of it? How often would he read it? How warily would he keep it? Why in this royal and sacred letter, sent from the King both of heaven and earth, all these favours, and a thousand more, are conveyed unto every believer. In that, we are forewarned, lest by our ignorance, impiety, and impenitency, we fall into the pit of hell. In that we are promised, and have given unto us, the pardon of all our sins, whereby we stand guilty of the second death, and the endless torments of the damned. By the virtue of it, we are not only comforted with grace in this world, but shall undoubtedly be crowned with glory and immortality in the world to come. Such a letter as this hath the mighty and terrible God, most glorious in all power and majesty, sent unto us miserable men, by nature wretched and forlorn creatures, dust and ashes. Why then, with what reverence, cheerfulness, and zeal, ought we to receive, read, hear, mark, learn, understand, and obey it?

A second motive may be, the precious and Divine matter which is contained in the Book of God, and that true and ever-during happiness, to which it alone can bring us. There is nothing handled in the Word of God but things of the greatest weight and highest excellency: as the infinite majesty, power, and mercy of God; the unspeakable love and strange sufferings of the Son of God; the mighty and miraculous working of the Holy Spirit upon the souls of men. There is nothing in this treasury, but orient pearls and rich jewels; as, promises of grace, spiritual comforts, confusion of sin, the triumph

of godliness, refreshing of wearied souls, the beauty of angels, the holiness of saints, the state of heaven, salvation of sinners, and everlasting life. What swine are they, that, neglecting these precious pearls, root only in the earth, wallow in worldly pleasures, feed upon vanities, transitory trash, and vanishing riches, which, in their greatest need, will “take them to their wings, like an eagle, and fly unto the heavens?” Besides, only the Word of God is able to prepare us for true happiness in this world, and to possess us of it in the world to come. That alone begets in us a true and universal holiness; “without which, none shall ever see the face of God:” for it is impossible to live the life of glory in heaven, if we live not here the life of grace in all our ways. It is called *the immortal seed*, because it renews us both in our spirits, souls, and bodies: *in our spirits*; that is, in judgment, memory, and conscience: *in our souls*; that is, in our wills and affections: *in our bodies*; that is, in every member. If the prince of this world hath not blinded the eyes of our minds, it only is able to enlighten our understandings, to rectify our wills, to sanctify our hearts, to mortify our affections; to set David’s door before our lips, “that we offend not with our tongues;” to set Job’s door before our eyes, “that they behold not vanity;” to manacle our hands and feet with the cords and bands of God’s law, that they do not walk or work wickedly. Nay, and it is able to furnish us with sufficiency of spiritual strength, to continue in all these good things unto the end. And if we be once thus qualified, we are rightly prepared for the glory that is to be revealed. As before, this holy Word did translate us from the darkness of sin into the light of grace; it can now much more easily, with joy and triumph, bring us from the light of grace, to the light of immortality, and everlasting pleasures at God’s right hand.

A third motive may be this; we must be judged by the Word of God at the last day. “If any man (saith Christ, John xii. 47, 48,) hear my words, and believe

not, I judge him not ; for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that refuseth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him ; the word that I have spoken, it shall judge him in the last day." Whensoever we shall come to judgment, (and we little know how near it is,) two books shall be laid open unto us ; the one of God's law, another of our own conscience. The former will tell us what we should have done ; for the Lord hath revealed it to the world, to be the rule of our faith and all our actions. The other will tell us what we have done ; for conscience is a fair register, light, and power in our understanding, which treasures up all our particular actions, against the day of trial ; discovers unto us the equity or iniquity of them ; and determines of them either with us or against us. Now we must not take any exception against the first ; that is, the law of God : "For the law of God, (saith David, Psalm xix. 7,) is perfect, converting the soul. The testimony of the Lord is sure, and giveth wisdom unto the simple." We cannot against the second ; that is, the book of our conscience : for it was ever in our keeping ; no man could corrupt it ; there is nothing written in it, but with our own hand. Now, in what a terrible case will a man be at that day, when he shall see the Book of God open before him ; in the light according to which he should have led all his life, and by which he is now to be judged ; and yet know himself to have had no knowledge, but to have been a mere stranger in it ? Though the great things of the law were many times published unto him, yet he counted them but as a strange thing. Every man's conscience is naturally corrupt, defiled, and uncomfortable ; and, therefore, at the last day, when it shall be awakened, opened, examined, it will bring forth nothing, but the worm that never dies ; except it hath been formerly in this world enlightened, purged, and sanctified by the word of grace, and the blood of the Lamb. Most accursed then, and forlorn, will be the state of every ignorant man, when he shall

appear before the Judge of all the world ; when he shall look upon his conscience, he shall find nothing but guilt and horror ; when upon the Word of God, after which he should have lived, and by which he must now be judged, he will see nothing but his own ignorance, blindness, and strangeness in it. And therefore all the plagues and curses denounced in it against ignorant, wicked, and unrepentant sinners, shall be his portion in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone for evermore.

A fourth motive may be, that fearful punishment and destruction which at length will certainly befall all negligent and contemptuous hearers of the Word, and those that practise not the power thereof in their lives and conversations. “Whosoever (saith our blessed Saviour,) shall not receive you, or hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or that city, shake off the dust of your feet : truly, I say unto you, it shall be easier for them of the land of Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgment, than for that city.” The infamous abominations, the damnable and crying sins of the Sodomites are known unto all. Who hath not heard of those floods of fire and brimstone which swept them away as the hatefulest creatures that lived upon earth ? How rueful, then, how lamentable will be their condition, who are liable to more horrible plagues than these ! We should therefore consider, that the negligent and unprofitable hearing of the Word of God is a sin of a far greater weight, and more fearful consequence, than we ordinarily imagine. When we hear the ministers and ambassadors of God delivering his will unto us, we are to conceive that in a more special manner we stand in the presence of the great God of heaven and earth, who is clothed with infinite terror, power, and majesty ; and we ought to proportion our behaviour with reverence, humility, and obedience, to so great a presence. Earthly princes will not endure contempt at their subjects’ hands. They cannot abide to have their majesty lightly set by, their laws and commands neglected and trodden under foot. Why then

should the Lord of glory, of justice and power, bear such indignities at the hands of sinful men? Certain it is, if we weigh aright the greatness of that God before whom we stand, and our own vileness, we should hold it most just if he should presently, in the place where we stand, punish our sleepiness, talking, wandering thoughts, and irreverent carriage at hearing his Word, with some sudden and remarkable vengeance, to be a spectacle unto others for “neglecting so great salvation.” It is God’s great mercy that such plagues and judgments are respited and deferred; for all the curses in the Book of God do naturally, deservedly, and in the course of God’s justice, belong unto the negligent hearer, and disobedient unto the Word of God. “All these curses (saith Moses, Deut. xxviii. 49,) shall come upon thee and pursue thee, and overtake thee, till thou be destroyed, because thou obeyest not the voice of the Lord thy God.

I come now, in the second place, to the lets, whereby a man may be hindered from hearing the Word of God, profiting by it, and practising the same.

A main hinderance is certain profane and unwarrantable conceits, which are entertained in the hearts of ignorant and wilful people. Some think that there is no such great need of following sermons, and frequenting holy assemblies. They ask, What! can we not save our souls, unless we go so often to church? Have we not the Bible, and other good books, at home to read? They might as well ask, Can we not have a harvest unless we have a seed-time, and rain, yea, both the former and the latter rain? Or can we not live except we have meat? Certainly not. No more can any man be saved, unless he follow the means appointed by God for his salvation; except he submit himself to that order which God, with great wisdom, hath established in his church. God himself hath appointed a publick ministry in the church; pastors and teachers for the gathering of the saints; and is it fit that any private exercise should cross God’s publick ordinances? No: It is both inconvenient and wicked, and

God's blessing is never to be looked for upon any action and exercise, though never so good in itself, if his will be not obeyed.

Yea, but some will say, It is good indeed sometimes, now and then, to hear a sermon; but what needs so much preaching, and sermon upon sermon? Would they have us saints and angels upon earth? Wretched is that man who is weary of the word of life; and he hath no true taste of holy things, who loaths this spiritual manna, though never so often rained from heaven. There is no saving knowledge of God in that man, who desires not to grow in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Would we not think him distracted, that would thus reason?—I hope I have eaten meat enough heretofore, and furnished myself with sufficient strength, so that I now need no more. Even just so doth he reason who complains of too much preaching, and too many sermons. Aye, but our fore-fathers, (will others say,) were never troubled with so many sermons, and yet we hope they are well, and in heaven. Our fore-fathers wanted that glorious noon-tide of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which we by the mercy of God enjoy. And therefore, whosoever of them perished without them, shall certainly be beaten with fewer stripes than those that shut their eyes against the blessed sunshine of God's holy truth, which is shed round about us; and "if it be hid, it is hid only to those that perish, in whom the God of this world hath blinded the eyes of their minds." Besides, if it pleased the Lord, in his secret judgment, to suffer some of our fore-fathers to live and die under the darkness of antichrist,—how much are we bound to bless God that we are brought up in the light of the gospel? And what heavy plagues and great damnation do we bring upon ourselves, if we neglect or despise so great salvation?

Well, but, (will others say,) to the attaining of eternal life, what needs so much ado, so much preaching, catechising, expounding, teaching, and praying with our families, which are so much and so often urged upon,

us? When all comes to all, this is the sum and end of all: "To fear God, and keep his commandments; that we may love God above all, and our neighbour as ourselves:" and we hope we can do this without all this ado. To fear God, and keep his commandments, (which is the whole duty of man,) and to love God above all, and our neighbours as ourselves, are matters indeed soon spoken, but not easily learned and practised. Is it enough, think you, to make a man a good carpenter, or mason, to say, That trade is soon learned: and, I know as much as the best workman can tell me. To build an house is nothing but to lay the foundation, to rear the walls, and cover it with a roof? Is it enough to make a good husbandman, to say, I know as much as the best husbandmen can teach me: for husbandry is nothing else but to sow and reap? Is it enough to make a good preacher, to say, It is no such great matter to make a sermon: I know as much in that point as the best scholar amongst them can tell me? To preach is nothing else but to expound the text, gather doctrines, and make applications to the hearts and consciences of the hearers. But it would be long before these idle vaunts would build houses, fill barns, or save souls. There is far more required to these businesses than so. There is to be undergone much toil and care, much trouble expense, and exercise, before any of these works can be rightly accomplished. It is even so in the great work of salvation. Christianity is not so easily purchased and practised. There goes more to the saving of a soul than to say, If that be all, I hope I can quickly learn to love God above all, and my neighbour as myself. For before these there go many things; as, a knowledge of God's will and Word; a thorough view of our own misery and corruptions in the glass of the law; strange agonies and sore pangs in the new birth and sorrow for sin; refreshings by the mercies of God, and merits of Christ; faith, repentance, a blessed and holy change in the whole man,—body, soul, and spirit. And then follows new obedience, which

consists in the uprightness of our own hearts, a charitable carriage towards our neighbours, and a zealous constancy in all religious duties and right service of God; which must be universal, in respect of the object: that is, we must walk in all his commandments: total, in respect of the subject; that is, we must serve him in all the powers of our souls and parts of our bodies; in our thoughts, words, and actions. In all which things, if a man be not particularly instructed, experienced, and practised, his love of God and his neighbour is but in word and tongue, not in deed and truth.

Well, but where there is so much preaching, there is much disquiet and discontent; for men are abridged of their former pastimes and pleasures, and urged unto more strictness of life. Whereas all was well before, in much quietness and peace. No marvel, though there be much struggling, great noise and stir, before the *strong man* in the gospel can be disarmed and dispossessed of his holds; that is, before satan, having long reigned in the hearts of ignorant and profane men, will be cast out by the preaching and power of the Word. This conquest costs dear; it will not be had without shedding the very heart's blood of our bosom-sin; which flesh and blood will not yield unto without blows and bloodshed. You may assure yourself, where the light of God's truth begins once to peep out, and the power of grace to work, for the driving away darkness, and subduing profaneness, you shall be sure ever there to have three fierce and implacable enemies start up; satan, wicked men, and a man's own corruptions. While men lie in sin, ignorance, and under the shadow of death, satan lets them alone; meddles not much with them, never troubles or disquiets them, but procures them all temporal happiness that can be; for he knows, if they so continue, they are his own, and children of endless perdition. But if once, by the power of the Word, they be enlarged out of the slavery of sin and death, and lay hold upon salvation, and begin to pursue after the glorious liberty of the saints, then the foe begins

to bestir himself like an enraged lion, and labours, with all malice and policy, to hinder such proceedings. And in this conspiracy he joins unto himself wicked men, to rail, revile, and rage against sincerity. And besides, a man's own corruption doth fret when it feels itself curbed by the law of the Spirit.

The gospel indeed is a *gospel of peace*: but of what peace? Of peace with God, with good men, and a man's own conscience; of the *peace that passeth all understanding*. But it ever proclaims open war against wickedness, profaneness, and corruptions; it will have no peace with impiety and rebellion against God. Hence it is that our Saviour tell us, "He came not to send peace into the earth;" but rather, fire, debate, and the sword. That is, wheresoever his Word is published powerfully with effect upon men's souls, there it stirs up much rage and bitter opposition against God's children. For as there is no true inward peace to the wicked,—so in this world there is no outward peace to the righteous; but they are still exercised with one cross and temptation or other; either the devil or wicked men are still plotting mischief and misery against them. But the troubles that arise at the preaching of the Word are not caused by it, but by men's corruptions. Would any man think that St. Paul or his preaching were in fault, because there was much ado wherever he came; and not rather the wicked infidels, which could not endure to have their sins reprov'd? Neither the sower nor the seed, Matt. xiii. are to be blamed that it doth not prosper; it is the ground that is only in fault; which is either stony, or thorny, or barren; or else it is the envious man, that soweth tares. The sower doth his duty, and the seed is pure and precious: it is men's corruptions and profane hearts that cause all the stir. Amongst four kinds of grounds, there is but one at the most (as appears in the parable of the sower, Matt. xiii.) in which the immortal seed of the Word takes root. And whom it does not humble it hardeneth; whom it makes not meek as a lamb, it makes as fierce

and furious as a lion, against the power of grace wrought in others, and against the profession and practice of sincerity.

Now I come to acquaint you with some sleights and temptations of satan, whereby he labours to bereave us of the blessing of profitable hearers, and to hinder the effectual working of the Word in our consciences and conversations. The first practice of satan is to keep men from diligent hearing the Word. If he cannot that way prevail, in the second place he labours to make the Word fruitless and unprofitable unto them. And that he doth by such means as these:—1. If we break through all lets, which might with-hold us from holy assemblies, then satan labours to work in us a carelessness and heedlessness in listening to those things which are delivered, and that by a kind of heartlessness in holy things, by dulness of spirit, drowsiness, sleepiness, gazing about, talking, or such like. And such hearers as these are never a whit moved with the Word preached, but remain in the same state they were in before. 2. But if he cannot speed this way, but that we rouse up ourselves to hear the Word of God; as desiring with care and good conscience to profit thereby,—then, in the second place, he seeks by all means to fill our heads and hearts with idle musings and wandering thoughts, which may distract and steal away our minds from attending to the Word. And that he doth, either by suggesting to us worldly things and the vanities thereof, as our affairs and business, our profits and preferments, our pleasures and delights. Or, if this will not prevail, by casting into our minds things which in their own nature may be good and religious, but because they are thought upon out of due time, they deprive us of the profit of the present holy exercise, which ought for the time only and wholly to take up our minds. If this yet avail nothing, but that we mark diligently and attentively all the while what the minister delivers,—then, in the third place, 1. In some he makes it ineffectual, by nourishing in them a neglect of reading the Scriptures, and ignorance in the principles of religion; so that though they attend never so well, yet they understand

not the sermons they hear. (Let the younger sort therefore, to prevent this mischief, acquaint themselves with the Scriptures from their youth ; and let the misery upon Eli's house terrify negligent and indulgent parents, 1 Sam. ii.) In this depth the Word is either buried as it is brought forth, or dies at the church door. 2. In others, he endeavours utterly to abolish all thought of it ; to drive and banish it out of their heads so soon as they have heard it. And that thus, if men's hearts be hardened through unbelief, or custom in sinning, and like the highway in the parable of the sower, then the evil one comes immediately and catcheth the seed of the Word, as soon as it is sown, out of the heart ; as we may see many times birds hovering greedily after the sower, to snatch away the corn before it take root in the ground. Or, otherwise, if the world hath stolen men's hearts, then needs not satan much to bestir himself ; he knows full well that worldly cares will presently choke the seed. As soon as the sermon is ended, and they turn their backs upon the church, there come immediately into their heads whole swarms of earthly thoughts, and they are presently plunged into the cares and plottings of earthly businesses.

If this yet will not serve the turn, but that the Word gets within a man, and works upon his understanding, so that his diligent hearing of it he furnishes himself with competent knowledge in the book of God,—then satan casts about another way ; which is, to make him content himself with a bare fruitless knowledge, without practising the power of it in his life and actions ; to rest contented with an ability to discourse upon points of religion, without inward sanctification, and subduing the will and affections to new obedience, and sincere exercise of Christianity. So that, for all his knowledge, he neither meddles with conversion, nor mends in his conversation. He labours to hinder his conversion by planting in his heart a prejudice against, 1. Preaching the law. 2. Distinguishing several states of unregenerate men. 3. The

differencing the children of God and the children of the devil, by special marks. 4. Pressing the doctrine of Christ, of "pressing in at the strait gate;" and gathering from Scripture those which shall be saved into a short sum. 5. And by making him suppose God a Being that is all mercy.

If this will not prevail, but a man endeavours to draw his knowledge into practice, and to reform his ways; then satan plots, with all the cunning he hath, to make him rest in a slight, superficial, and partial reformation; to content himself with an unsound, or unsaving conversion. For there may be many changes in a man, from worse to better, and yet he not be a true Christian. 1. He may be changed, from a notorious sinner, to a civil, honest man. Whereas he had been desperate in lewd courses, he may grow sober and moderate in his carriage; and yet, for all this, continue in his ignorance,—a mere stranger to the way of godliness. 2. From civil honesty he may pass on to a formal Christianity, and do and perform religious services; and yet lie in his sins, and want the power of inward sanctification. 3. Yet further, by a general power of the Word, he may in some sort be inwardly enlightened; he may have understanding and joy by the Word, and may do many things after it, and forsake many sins; and yet, for all this, he may come short of a sound conversion; if he suffer some one sin to reign in him; if he do not entirely resign himself, his spirit, soul and body to the Lord's service, and study to please him in all things. For this is a certain rule, *That true turning unto God, and the remaining in the practice of any one sin, cannot stand together.* These changes a man may have, and yet the great work of regeneration not be wrought upon him. For where there is a sound conversion, there a man is wholly sanctified unto God; to serve him in his whole man, both body, soul, and spirit. He shakes hands with all sins; he sells all for the jewel of the gospel; he regards not sin in his heart, but hath a respect to all God's commandments.

On the other hand, if but one sin be unsold, the man continues still a bond-slave of hell. By one little hole a ship will sink into the bottom of the sea. The stab of a pen-knife to the heart will as well destroy a man as all the daggers that killed Cæsar in the senate-house. The soul will be strangled with one cord of vanity, as well as with all the cart-ropes of iniquity; only the more sins, the more plagues and fiercer flames in hell: but he that lives and dies impenitent in one, it will be his destruction. One dram of poison will despatch a man, and one reigning sin will bring him to endless misery. Let us take heed therefore, when we go about reformation, lest we be surprised by this craft of satan. Let us resolve upon a thorough reformation; which, when we shall carefully and earnestly go about, satan will be sure to set upon us, as Pharaoh did upon Moses and Aaron, when the Lord had commanded them to go three days' journey in the desert, to do service unto him, that by all means he might hinder them in this holy business. 1. If they will needs fear God, he stands not much upon it but that they may do it outwardly, and in profession, so that they will continue in Egypt, within the kingdom of darkness, and lie still in their sins. 2. If they will not rest here, but will needs go out of the kingdom of darkness, he is not much against it, but that they may go the half way; that is, he will suffer them to forego the outward practice of many sins, so that inwardly their heart nourish and embrace them still. 3. If they desire and endeavour to become new men, both inwardly and outwardly,—to be sanctified in actions and affections,—to serve God both in soul and body, he will yet yield so far that they may be rid of some sins, both in heart and practice; as, perhaps, of sins of custom; but then he will be a solicitor unto them, to retain other sins; as, perhaps, sins of nature. For example: It may be they may both forbear the outward practice, and also inwardly loath swearing, drunkenness, and other such like sins of custom; but they will cherish in the bosom of their affections, pride, lust, anger,

and such other sins, the natural brood of original corruption.

4. But if they also conquer these, then he tempts them mainly to continue at least in worldliness. For this, in many men's hearts, hath greater power, and bears more sway, than nature or natural affection. He will suggest unto them, that, upon an eager pursuit of gain, depends their livelihood, their content and happiness in the world; so that perhaps at last, after all this, they rest and settle themselves upon sins of advantage; as, unlawful and excessive gaining, earthly-mindedness, serving the times, and such like. 5. But if, by the grace of God, any be so blessed as resolutely to pass through all these temptations, so that they will not leave so much as an hoof behind them in his kingdom of darkness; then this spiritual Pharaoh presently arms himself with all the crafts of hell, with legions of fiends, and princes of the darkness of this world; with all his malice; with the fire and furious rage of profane wretches; with the sharp swords and poisoned arrows of lying tongues; and with all other advantages, which either the lowest hell, or the wide, wicked world can afford. And thus appointed, he pursues, with bloody and implacable fury, all those who have escaped out of this captivity, far more eagerly and enviously than ever Pharaoh did the Israelites. That either he may bring them back again into his bondage, or else take them quite away, and destroy them, that they may not attain the full light of the saints, nor do long service unto the Lord. And certainly, if all the power of hell, the strongest temptations, the scourge of tongues, the world's malice, the spiteful spirit of profaneness, the frownings of friends, the scornful insolencies of enemies, the cursed and enticing cries of our old companions;—if wicked men or damned devils be able to prevail, he will be sure to stay them before they enter into the state of grace and blessedness. But yet, if a man put on Paul's armour, in Eph. vi. David's royal courage, Psal. iii. 6, Moses's princely zeal, "that he will not leave a hoof behind;" that is, that he will not leave one corruption

unmortified, one affection unsanctified, one rebellious action unreformed of and unforsaken ; one holy duty unperformed, one commandment unobeyed ;—why then he may look for a more glorious spiritual deliverance than Moses had a temporal one. Hell and confusion shall swallow up all his enemies, but into his heart shall be plentifully poured comfort, joy, and peace ; and upon his head shall a crown of immortality flourish for ever.

I have stayed very long upon the fifth practice of satan, for I know it is much and often exercised, and with great success : when by diligent hearing of God's Word, faithfully urged upon them, they are driven to a reformation but in part, and by halves—unsound and unsaving : so that it may be they may forsake sins of custom,—as lying, swearing, or drunkenness ; but keep sins of nature,—as pride, lust, and anger. Or, it may be, they may forsake both these kinds of sins, and keep sins of advantage ; as, oppression, unlawful gaining, or grinding the faces of the poor. Or they may leave all these, and yet keep sins of company,—as idle and vain talking, railing against and slandering their neighbours, and uncharitable judging and censuring their brethren. It may be they may be careful in their general calling of Christianity, but unfaithful in those particular callings wherein God in his providence hath set them. Or, contrarily, they may be of Christian behaviour abroad, and in publick, as at sermons and in the church, but not at home, and in their private families ; never teaching or praying with them. They may seem zealous in the commandments of the first table, and about the service of God, but not in the second, towards their neighbour. Or, they may deal justly and honestly with others, but be void of the knowledge and fear of God. If satan can prevail with a man any of these ways, he keeps him his own : for he that is soundly converted, justified, and sanctified indeed, must needs be out of love with every sin, with the whole course of iniquity ; and with sincerity

and cheerfulness embrace the entire body of Christianity, and have a regard to all God's commandments.

6. Now I come to a sixth device of satan, whereby he labours to make the Word unprofitable. If he cannot stay us in our reformation, but that we will cast away all sins, then he seeks by all means to hinder our continuance. If the seed of the Word be received with joy, and spring up for a time, he raiseth persecution, tribulation of crosses, whereby it is blasted, and comes to nothing. The unclean spirit may for a time go out of a man, and walk through dry places; but if it be possible, he will return with seven other spirits worse than himself, and the end of that man is worse than the beginning. A man may flee from the pollution of the world, but by the policy of satan he may be entangled again therein. He may be washed for a while, and yet afterwards wallow again in the mire of sin. He may be endued with an inferior sanctification of the Spirit, and afterwards "tread under foot the Son of God." He may be a partaker of the Holy Ghost, and yet, after a time, fall away to the very "doing despite against the Spirit of grace." Let every man take heed, then, in the name of God, lest by the temptations of satan he be turned back again from a good course; lest, after he be washed, he wallow again in the mire of worldliness and worldly vanities; and after he hath escaped the filthiness of the world, lest he be again entangled therein. Let us beware of longing after those sins which we began to reform: let us not lust again after the flesh-pots of Egypt, after we are in some good sort enlarged from the bondage of sin, and tyranny of the hellish Pharaoh. It is a fearful curse to continue in hardness of heart, and sinful courses: but to leave them for a little, and to sink back again, is to have God's *curse* bitter against us, (if we repent not,) and the fire of hell made more hot for us. "If a man (as it is Heb. vi. 4, 6,) hath once been enlightened, and then fall away, it is impossible to be renewed by repentance." I know that place is principally to be understood of the highest degree of apostasy: but he that falls away from any good course, falls towards

that irrecoverable fall, and makes himself more incapable of repentance, than if he never had been enlightened : and it is just with God, to punish such with a reprobate sense, and hearts *that cannot repent*.

It then nearly concerns us, when once we have felt the sweetness of grace, and “tasted of the powers of the world to come;” to drink deeper of the waters of life, and to “follow hard towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” When we feel any good motions arise in our hearts, let us labour to follow them, to nourish them, to blow them up, to make a fire of them ; lest they only make a flash, and pass away as the lightning. Let us put them in practice with zeal and constancy, that we be not as the unfaithful waters, which in the summer are dried up ; or as the dead trees, which perish in winter. But that we may remain pure and perfect, as the living waters and olives of the Lord. Let us make a covenant, even *a covenant* (as the Scripture speaketh,) *of salt*, durable and perpetual, with the Lord, to live before him in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life. For to him that goes through with his holy business, that “fights the good fight of faith, finisheth his course,” and overcomes ; to him, and to him alone, shall all those glorious blessings be performed, which are promised in the second and third chapters of the Revelation, “To eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God ; not to be hurt of the second death ; to eat of the manna which is hid, and to have the white stone of victory given him ; to have power given him to rule over nations, and to be lightened with heavenly brightness, like the morning star ; to be clothed with white array, (that is, with heavenly glory,) and to have his name continued in the book of life ; to be a pillar in the temple of God,” (that is, a firm and immoveable place of eternal glory;) “to sup with Christ, and to sit with him upon his throne for ever.” Thus shall he be honoured and crowed with the excellency, fulness, and variety of all glory, joy, and happiness, who

enters with sincerity, and courageously ends his race of holiness, and conquers in his spiritual fight. But all fearful men, (as it is Rev. xxi. 8,) who slip back for fear of men, or love of the world, or to serve the times ; all faint-hearted men in the Lord's battles shall be punished "with unbelievers, with the abominable, with murderers, and whoremongers, with idolaters and liars, in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

If the cruel dragon cannot devour the woman's child so soon as ever it is brought forth ; if he cannot reign again in a regenerate man, brought forth by the power of the Word, in the womb of the church, he casteth out after him floods of outward crosses and vexations. If he cannot wound him in his soul, yet he will vex him in his body, goods, or good name. If he cannot hinder him of heaven, he will give him little rest upon earth. If he cannot bring him into disgrace with God, he will be sure to raise him hatred enough, malice and discountenance amongst men. He will do his worst, to load him with all outward discouragements ; as poverty, slanders, scoffings, railings, reproaches, contempts, and a thousand other persecutions. But, in such cases as these, let every child of God comfort himself by such considerations as these : First, It is a decree of heaven, resolved upon and ratified by the Lord our God, confirmed by the experience of all the patriarchs and prophets, of the apostles and professors of Christ, of all the saints and servants, nay, and of the Son of God himself, that, "through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of heaven." So often, therefore, as we shall see any afflictions coming towards us, let us acknowledge them to be so many marks that we are in the way to heaven : through which, if we but walk a little further with patience, we shall descry a crown of glory, which is our own for ever. Secondly, Though by these means, by these outward crosses and afflictions, satan dischargeth upon us the very gall of his bitterness, the poison of his malice, and arrows

of his spite ; yet, by the merciful and medicinal hand of God, they are returned upon his own head ; they strike through the heart of sin, and become as precious restoratives, to repair in us the decays of spiritual life : for in God's children, crosses and afflictions have these worthy effects. 1. They startle us out of our security, carelessness, and coldness. They breed in us a sense of our own wants, and the necessity of God's providence and protection. They add oil unto the flame of our first love, put life into our religious exercises, and power and spirit into our prayers. 2. They curb and control the pride, insolence, and impatience of our nature. They cool and kill the heat and intemperance of our affections. They weaken indeed the whole old Adam in us, with all his lusts and concupiscence ; but give strength to the new man, with all his godly and gracious motions, holy and heavenly actions. 3. They make us contemn this vain, deceitful, and flattering world ; the love of which is the eternal loss both of bodies and souls in the other world. They happily wean us from the love of it, and rend our dull affections from the earth, to which they cleave, and lift up both our heads and hearts to heaven, and to the glory which is to be revealed. 4. Lastly, They are as sharp and precious eye-salves, to clear and enlarge the spiritual sight of our souls, too much dimmed with earthly dust, and with gazing too long on the painted glory of the world ; that so we may see further into the great mystery of godliness, deeper into the mass of our own corruptions, wider upon the vanities of the world, and higher into the happiness of heaven, and that great beauty, glory, and majesty above. They serve to breed a distaste against transitory delights. They are as pruning-knives, to cut away the excesses, vanities, and unnecessary cares that grow upon us ; and so to trim us, that we may bring forth more profitable, plentiful, and fairer fruits of godliness. Thus satan is disappointed in his policy ; his malice makes a medicine for our souls ; he purposes and hopes, by crosses and afflictions, to turn

us back, or to make us weary in our course of holiness ; but, by the mercy of God, these things become as spurs, to prick us forward in our Christian race ; and as hedges to keep us in from wandering out of the way. Thirdly, That God's child may not be too much cast down for crosses and persecutions, let him consider, that howsoever satan and wicked men are the instruments, yet our gracious God hath the greatest sway ; he directs, limits, and moderates the rage of all our enemies, whether they be devils or men, as it pleaseth him ; and ever certainly to the singular good of his children, if they be patient and faithful.

Let us then, in all our sufferings and afflictions, stirred up against us for sticking to sincerity, and keeping a good conscience, lift up our eyes to the mighty Lord of heaven and earth ; who, by the strong arm of his omnipotence, holds fast in a chain, satan, that raging lion, that he cannot stir one link further than he will give him leave ; he cannot go a hair's breadth beyond his commission. Nay, and that which he is suffered to do, makes one way or other for our greater good. Let us consider what a loving and tender-hearted Father hath us under his correction ; and holds in his hand the fury of satan, the malice of men, the power and particular stings of all creatures, as rods and scourges to reform and amend us ; to keep us in a course of holiness, and in the right way to heaven. His fatherly love and tenderheartedness unto such as fear him, doth as far surpass the most compassionate bowels of any earthly father, as God surpasseth man ; and, an infinite nature a finite creature. The kindness of a mother to her child is nothing to that love which God beareth to a true Christian. "A mother may forget her child, and not have compassion upon the son of her womb : " but God neither can nor will forget him. The stony rocks and mountains stick fast and sure unto their foundations ; but God's love to his child is far surer and sounder. "The mountains shall remove, and the hills shall fall

down, (saith God by Isaiah,) but my mercy shall not depart from thee; neither shall the covenant of my peace fall away, saith the Lord, that hath compassion on thee."

Can any man stop the course of the sun, the moon, and stars? Can he change the seasons of the day and the night? No more can any creature, or a world of creatures, stop and turn aside the streams of God's endless mercies and favours to his faithful servants. "If you can change," (said God by Jeremy,) "the courses of the sun, and of the moon, and of the stars; if you can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, that there should not be day and night in their season; then may my covenant be broken unto David my servant; then will I cast off all the seed of Israel," Jer. xxxi. 33. You may therefore make sure of it; every sincere man is ever in God's sight, for his good and preservation; he is "graven upon the palm of his hand, he is set as a signet upon his arm, and as a seal upon his heart." God is ever far more sensible, tender, and compassionate of the sighs, tears, and miseries of his children, than any man can be of the pricking of the apple of his own eye. He gives them comfort in all their afflictions, deliverance from them, and benefit by them. In all troubles he most certainly either quite frees them, or graciously preserves them, so far as is best for his glory and their good, and useful for the church and his other children. Indeed satan's work and end is, to vex and discourage. "It is evermore the work of the devil," (saith St. Cyprian,) "that he may with lies tear the servants of God, and by false opinions spread concerning them, may defame their glorious name; that such as are bright in the light of their own conscience may be darkened and disgraced by the reports of others."

Wicked men, because they are in darkness, and their works are evil, cannot endure the children of light, and their holiness of life. For this is the root and fountain

of all their malice and cruelty; as appears, 1 John iii. 12, "Cain slew his brother; and wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's good." Hence springs all the fury, all the wrongs and slanders, which are wont to be laid on true Christians: they are hated for their goodness, and because they will not run with the wicked "unto the same excess of riot:" they are filled with contempt and reproach, with the "mockings of the wealthy, and despitefulness of the proud," because they will not swear, lie, pour in strong drink, profane the sabbaths, follow the fashions and corruptions of the times. In a word, because they will not be profane in this world, and damned in the world to come. But God's end, in all false reports unjustly raised against his children, and in other crosses, is to stir up and revive in them zeal, devotion, and faithfulness, in praying, praising, and serving him; to purge out of them the dross and relics of sin; to humble them, and to bring them to a true denying of themselves; to try their faith, patience, and constancy; or for their greater good, one way or other.

If all this will stand satan in no stead; if the heat of persecution inflame the zeal of the true Christian; if reproaches and afflictions be so far from dulling his forwardness, that they set an edge upon his affections; then, the last temptation of satan, to hinder the sanctifying power of the Word, and to make it unprofitable, is spiritual pride; which, by his malicious cunning, he extracts even out of his graces and virtues; and since he cannot keep goodness out of the soul, he uses it as an instrument to wound itself. For when a man is most enriched with gifts, graces, and spiritual strength, satan seeks most busily to make him proud of them, that so himself may lose the comfort, his brethren the fruit, and God the glory of them. This spiritual pride is, as it were, satan's last entrenchment, which he holds the longest, with most desperate pertinacy. Much spiritual

wisdom, a great measure of humility, and the whole armour of God, is required to this combat. For he is so exercised in the point, that, if we be so humble, that he cannot make us proud of any thing else, he will labour to make us proud even of our humility; and proud, that we are not proud of our gifts. Except a Christian continually watch over his heart, this may steal upon him before he be aware. But as a man tenders the salvation of his soul, let him take heed of entertaining a proud and over-weening conceit of his own graces, gifts, or good actions. Let him consider, that the more spiritual gifts and graces he hath received from the free mercy of God, the more will be required at his hands: and that he must shortly give a strict account of the usage and employment of every one before the impartial and uncorrupted tribunal of heaven. Let no man then labour to make himself glorious, by those graces which are none of his own; but let him glorify God with them, in humility, faithfulness, and sincerity; and improve them for the owner's advantage, that so he may render a comfortable account at that great day.

Thus far I have proposed motives to quicken you to a constant hearing and understanding of the holy Word of God; and acquainted you with many lets and temptations, which satan usually casts in our way, to hinder us therein. Now, in the third place, I will lay down certain rules and instructions for your right hearing of God's Word. That the Word of God may be unto you the word of grace, the savour of life unto life; you must look carefully, 1. Unto your preparation before you come; 2. Unto your carriage while you are there; and 3. Unto your behaviour afterward.

I. First, I am persuaded, the neglect of a due preparation is the cause that thousands receive no benefit by the Word; but that the sermons they hear are registered, as in a table of remembrance, before God, as so many witnesses against them, for their greater condemnation at the day of accounts. There is no affair of weight and

consequence, either in nature or art, but there is required some preparation for the more happy and successful accomplishment and performance. How much more in the affairs of God, businesses of eternity, and salvation of men's souls? The ground must be prepared for the seed, if we look it should prosper. How much more should our dull and dead hearts be stirred up, and furrowed, as it were, with humiliation, reverence, and repentance; that, by the grace of God, and the sanctifying power of the Spirit, it may take root in them, and spring up to eternal life? The ground must be laid, and some imperfect draughts, shadows, and resemblances premised, before a picture can be done to the life, or a full proportion and lively representation portrayed: how much more ought the ground of our hearts to be prepared, that by the preaching of the Word, the image of Christ Jesus may with a lively and fresh impression be stamped upon them?

Were a man the next day to go about a business that concerned either his life, or livelihood, would he not be musing by what means he might work out his deliverance? What behaviour might be fittest, to win favour in so weighty an affair? How much more ought we, before we intrude into the house of God, where matters of our highest interest are proposed by the minister of the Word; even our everlasting estate in another world? I say, how ought we to think with ourselves, how we may make our souls fittest to understand and accept the covenant of grace, to receive the seal of the Spirit, and to get assurance of that glorious inheritance in the heavens? Inducements we have, and motives many, both from precept and practice, in the book of God, for the performance of this Christian duty of preparation. "Take heed to thy foot," (saith the preacher,) "when thou enterest into the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools; for they know not that they do evil." Before thou set foot into the church, to hear the Word of God, be sure to settle thy

affections, that they be sober, moderate, and fit to entertain the word of life. Let thy heart be seasoned with, 1. Softness; 2. Humility; 3. Honesty; 4. Faith; 5. Teachableness. 1. If thou do not preserve thy heart tender, soft, and flexible, the Word will not make any deep impression upon it; all holy admonitions, reproofs, and instructions, will be unto thee as arrows shot against a stone wall. 2. We must bring with us an humble heart, to the hearing of the Word; for, “the Lord resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble. Them that be meek, will he guide in judgment, and teach the humble his way.” The proud heart is so swelled with vanity and self-love, that there is no room for the precious treasure of saving grace. But a lowly heart, broken and bruised with conscience of sin, is a fit seat for the mighty Lord, and his saving graces, Isa. lvii. 15. 3. We must come with an honest heart; which hateth all corruptions, both in itself and others; which hath no delight in any sinful pleasures; which hath no purpose to continue in any one sin whatsoever; but is ready and resolved, though it be much cumbered with its own corruptions, the world’s inticements, and satan’s craftiness; yet to serve and please God, in all the ways of his commandments, and that sincerely and continually. All profitable and fruitful hearers have such good and honest hearts, and are resembled by the good ground, Luke viii. 15. But that is a wicked heart, and not fit to be wrought upon by the ministry of the Word, which purposeth to cherish any one sin whatsoever. 4. Our hearts must be seasoned with faith; otherwise, it will not sink into them with power. The old Jews heard the word, but “it profited them not, because it was not mixed with faith in those that heard it,” Heb. iv. 2. The fearful threatenings of the law, by faith receive an edge to wound, and pierce, and strike through our souls. And faith it is that animates the promises of the gospel with such a sovereign sweetness, and powerful comfort, that

they are able, not only to raise us from the depth of remorse and fear; but also to put us into a paradise of spiritual pleasures. But if the Word light upon a faithless heart, it dies; it does no good. 5. We must bring with us into the Lord's sanctuary, teachable hearts, that readily open themselves to receive the Lord of glory, with whatsoever he shall reveal unto us out of his holy Word. "Sacrifice and burnt-offerings," (saith David,) "thou wouldst not, but mine ears hast thou prepared." As if he should have said, thou hast bored new ears in my heart, that I can now reverently attend unto the mystery of grace. With such hearts as these must we come to the hearing of the Word, if we look that it should be unto us a word of salvation; and must not be of the number of those that offer the sacrifice of fools, and yet know not that they do evil.

To learn how profitable this preparation is, consider the words of Zophar, "If thou prepare thine heart, and stretch out thine hands towards him. If iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away, and let no wickedness dwell in thy tabernacle. Then truly shalt thou lift up thy face without spot, and shalt be stable, and shalt not fear," Job xi. 13, 14, 15. Preparation of the heart is here the first step unto many glorious blessings. The heart must be first prepared, before other holy duties can be fitly performed, or God's blessings expected. And when thou hast prepared thine heart; then, Secondly, pour it out in prayer before the throne of grace; Thirdly, purge it from corruption; banish far, and bar out all iniquity; Fourthly, be sure to reform, instruct, and pray with thy family, or those that are about thee. Let no wickedness, ignorance, profaneness, swearing, drunkenness, or the like, dwell in thy tabernacle, or harbour in thine house; and then open thy heart and hands; for the windows of heaven shall be set wide open, that all manner of spiritual comforts, all the blessings of peace and happiness, may in abundance be showered down upon thee.

I come now to the special points considerable in preparation, before we present ourselves to hear the Word. This preparation is an holy exercise, which, by examination of our consciences, purgation of our hearts, prayer unto God, and private reading the Scriptures, maketh our souls fit vessels to receive the treasures of grace, offered unto us by the ministry of the Word; that so they may be the more effectually wrought upon, and subdued to the power and practice thereof. In this preparation I consider especially these four things: 1. Examination of the conscience; 2. Purgation of the heart; 3. Prayer unto God; 4. Readiness of heart to receive every truth.

First, Examination is a duty practicable by all Christians, at many times, and upon sundry occasions. It is either, First, extraordinary; and that is, 1. Either in the time of a solemn fast, and general humiliation, for some publick plague and calamity that lies upon the state or church. We are then seriously to search our consciences, that we may throw those sins out of our affections and allowance, which have their part in pulling down those publick plagues upon us. Or, 2. When our family is visited with some special scourge, and then must we make an impartial inquisition into our hearts; lest we be the Achans, who, by our secret sins, provoke God's wrath. Or, 3. When ourselves, in a more private and particular manner, are afflicted with some special vexation; as, by some malady and misery in our bodies, with some terrors and fears in our minds, or with some slanders, disgraces, and imputations upon our good names. When God's hand is upon us in any of these ways, we are presently to conceive, that the sins of our souls are the true causes of all the miseries and crosses which befall us; and therefore we are narrowly to inquire into ourselves, and to cast out our secret beloved sins, those lurking rebels, the breeders of all our woe.

There is also, Secondly, a more ordinary examination necessary, and that, 1. Especially every day; that we

may make the score of our sins less, and our account shorter, against the day of our visitation ; that we may more entirely and comfortably preserve and enjoy God's favour and protection, inward peace of conscience, spiritual joy, and Christian cheerfulness in all our affairs.

2. Before we come to receive, and be partakers of the holy sacrament of the sacred body and blood of Christ, lest by neglect and omission of this duty, we become unworthy receivers, and so eat and drink our own judgment. 3. Before we go into the house of God, and present ourselves before his messengers, to be instructed in his will from heaven, out of his holy Word ; lest this blessed ordinance should be accursed unto us. You may see in the prophet Ezekiel, xiv. 7, 8, how the Lord threatened the person that came to his ministers to inquire of them, and yet separated himself from the Lord, and set up any idol in his heart. The Lord declared he would set his face against him, and make him a sign and a proverb, and cut him off from the midst of his people. Whence we may well infer, that it will be very dangerous for any to come to the hearing of the Word, without examination of his heart, whether there be any stumbling-block of iniquity in it, or not.

Secondly, Because that examination of the heart, to find out our corruptions, tends especially to the cleansing of it ; therefore the second duty, before the hearing of the Word, is the cleansing of the heart, 1. From sin ; which the Scripture bears much upon, Jam. i. 22, " Lay aside all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the ingrafted word." This is a fit preparative for hearing the Word, as appears also by that parallel place, 1 Pet. ii. 1, 2, " Wherefore putting away all malice, all guile, and hypocrisy, and evil speakings, as new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the Word." As it is with the body, when the stomach is foul and clogged with bad humours, we should first purge it, before we feed it ; for otherwise, whatsoever we eat doth but increase the corrupt humours of the body. So it is

with the soul, when it is clogged with sin ; whatsoever is heard in the ministry of the Word, will be perverted and abused by it, and wrested to our destruction. 2. The heart must also be purged from all worldly cares and thoughts. The cares of the world choke the seed of the Word, and surfeit the heart. Now, as it is with a man in a surfeit, he is not fit to eat, neither can he digest any wholesome food : so, when the heart is surfeited with worldly cares, it is unfit for any spiritual food. How then shall they profit by the Word, that jump out of their worldly business, and from busying their heads about their callings, into the house of God ? Truly, though they be never so diligent in hearing, yet “ their hearts will go after their covetousness.”

A third duty before hearing of the Word, is prayer. No good thing can be expected from God, if it be not sought by prayer. And we find it laid down as a condition required, Prov. ii. “ My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and incline thine ear to wisdom, and apply thy heart to understanding ; yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.” The reason is, ver. 6, “ For the Lord giveth wisdom, and out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.” Because the Lord gives knowledge, therefore you must cry for it unto him. What is the reason that you pray for your daily bread, and a blessing upon it ? Why, Deut. viii. 3, “ Man lives not by bread only ; but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord.” If this be so, much more ought you to pray for a blessing upon your spiritual food. That your souls may therefore be nourished by it, you ought, 1. To pray for the teachers, that they may so speak as they ought to speak. And, 2. For yourselves, that you may be blessed in hearing : for no man can receive any thing, except it be given him from above. God saith, “ I am the Lord thy God, which teacheth thee to profit,” Isa. xlviii. 17. Therefore there

can be no profiting by the Word, without seeking unto the Lord for it.

Fourthly, you must be sure to go with an open heart, ready to receive every truth that God shall teach you. It is said of those noble Bereans, Acts xvii. 11, that they received the word with all readiness of mind, i. e. readiness to receive every truth. And Cornelius said, Acts x. 33, "We are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God." ("That are commanded thee of God:") not what any minister shall teach, be he never so good, or so learned; nay, were he an angel sent from heaven, yet his doctrine must be examined, Gal. i. 8. When there is such a disposition in us, as to receive both in judgment and practice whatsoever God shall reveal unto us out of his Word, this is a precious disposition.

II. Secondly, Let me proceed briefly to those duties that are required in the hearing of the Word. Which we must the rather stir up ourselves unto, because we have naturally uncircumcised hearts, and are dull of hearing. Now the principal duties in hearing are five: 1. You must set yourselves as in God's presence, whilst you are hearing of his Word, and consider that it is God you have to deal with, and not man; and that it is God's Word, and not man's. It is the great commendation of the Thessalonians, that they received the word as the Word of God. Yea, it is the Lord himself that speaks unto you in our ministry. And the Lord is present in a special manner, where his Word is preached, to observe how it is received, or delivered; and either to bless or curse the hearers, or speakers, accordingly. So that of this, and such like places, it may be said, as Jacob said of Bethel, Gen. xxviii. 16, 17, "Surely, the Lord is in this place; and how dreadful is this place! This is no other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven."

2. The second duty in hearing is diligent attention to what we hear; so Prov. iv. 20—22, "My son attend unto my words, incline thine ear unto my sayings, keep them in

the midst of thine heart, for they are life unto those that find them :'' i. e. look as a condemned man will hearken to the sentence of the prince ; every word he speaks being life or death : as the servants of Benhadad, when they were in their enemies' power, 1 Kings xx. 33, they observed diligently whether any word of comfort would come from him, and they did hastily catch it. With such diligence and attention, poor condemned creatures, (as we are,) are to hear the Word of God.

3. You must hear the Word with understanding : labour to understand what you hear. And to this end, the minister must have a special care to teach plainly, so as he may be understood. Christ calls upon his hearers for this, Matt. xv. 13, " Hear and understand :'' how should we else profit by what we hear ? " Understandest thou what thou readest," (said Philip to the Eunuch :) so say thou to thine own heart, " Understandest thou what thou hearest ?" Now the means to understand the Word are these: First, Come to the Word with a willing mind to learn. You know the Eunuch, Acts viii. though he understood not what he read, yet, because he had a mind to learn, the Lord provided a teacher for him. Men love to teach willing scholars : so doth God, when we come with willing minds to be taught. Secondly, Exercise yourselves in the truth of God. You must, by continual use, get your senses exercised to discern both good and evil ; but especially, be well acquainted with the principles and grounds of the catechism. It is the want of this makes men that they understand not what is preached. They that are not first well nourished with milk, will not be fit to receive stronger meat. If the foundation be not well laid, it is in vain to build. Thirdly, Walk according to light, Psa. cxi. 10, " A good understanding have they that do his commandments." Then, if thou wouldst get a good understanding, and know the mystery of godliness, walk according to knowledge, employ that little knowledge thou hast, and there is a promise that thou shalt have

more. Fourthly, Be diligent in instructing and teaching thy family. If thou art set over others, a little knowledge will increase greatly, by this means. Gen. xviii. 17, 19, the Lord said, "Shall I hide any thing from Abraham?" &c. No. And he gives this reason, "I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord." If you teach your families, God will teach you. There are a sort of doltish hearers, that will hear, and seem to be very attentive, from year's end to year's end, and be never a whit the wiser. The heavy judgment of God is upon many of them; and in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, "By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand;" and that, chap. xxvii. 11, "It is a people of no understanding; therefore he that made them, shall not save them; and he that formed them shall shew them no favour."

4. You must hear the Word with affection and delight. It is said of God's people in the primitive church, that they heard the Word gladly. "I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoils," (saith David, Psalm cxix. 162.) David had been a soldier; and ye know, that they that have lain at the siege of a city a long time, and at last take it, will rejoice exceedingly in the spoil of it; therefore he rejoices in the Word, as they that divide the spoils. And truly, whereas common people complain of the badness of their memories; this would be a marvellous help to their memories; if they would hear with delight; therefore David saith, Psalm cxix. 16, "I will delight myself in thy statutes, I will not forget thy word." This delight he means will strengthen our memories. Contrary to this are a great number, that hear without any delight; yea, account it a weariness, Mal. i. 13. But the Lord hath threatened, that the Word shall never do us good, unless we attend to it with love and delight, 2 Thess. ii. 10, 11, "Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved; therefore God shall send them strong delusions, to believe a lie." A

fearful threatening, much to be considered in these days. For this is the reason, that hellish delusions have such entertainment; because God in his just judgment, gives up those to such strong delusions, that love not the strict truth of the Word of God.

5. You must hear the Word with application of it to your own hearts and lives; apply every truth to yourselves, for your own use and comfort, and terror, and instruction: as it is, Job v. last, "Hear this, and know it for thyself;" carry this truth home to thine own heart: and, First, There is no truth of God taught out of his Word, but it concerns every one of God's people, and was intended for our use, Rom. xv. 4, "Whatsoever is written, is written for our learning." Secondly, There is no truth can be taught to do us good, unless we apply it: as no plaster can do the patient good, unless it be applied; no meat be able to do us good, be it dressed never so curiously, unless it be eaten and digested. This comparison is applied by the prophet to this purpose, Isaiah lv. 2, "Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good."

Thus much of the duties required in hearing. Now follow, in the third place, those duties that are required after hearing. 1. We must be careful to remember and keep that which we have heard, Prov. iv. 4, "My son, let thine heart retain my words:" and, ver. 21, "Keep them in the midst of thine heart." A man that hath a jewel, will be careful to lock it up in the safest chest he hath, lest it should be stolen away. This is the very comparison of the wise man, Prov. vi. 20, 21. So "Mary, (Luke ii. 51,) kept all the sayings in her heart." And David, Psalm cxix. 11, hid the commandments in his heart; and he gives the reason, that he "might not sin against the Lord." And the truth is, that as meat that is eaten, if it remains not in the stomach, will never do us good, so the best spiritual food that can be, except it be retained by us, will not profit us: Luke viii. 15, "The good ground are they, which with an honest and

good heart, having heard the word, keep it." Many there are, that are very careless of this duty. They think they have discharged themselves abundantly, if they hear the whole sermon attentively; as though there were nothing more required at their hands. Like our Saviour's hearers, Matt. xxii. 22, "When they heard him they marvelled, and left him, and went their way:" but we never hear more of them. So many hear with open ears; but, it goes in at one ear, and out at the other. Others hear, and the Word smites them a little on their consciences, and, one would think, some good thing would be wrought; but they go away, and the motion dies. They are as men that are sea-sick, whilst the Word humbles them, and makes their consciences sick; but they are whole, when they are once landed at the church-door. Well then, let us, in the fear of God, hearken diligently to the words of the Holy Ghost, Heb. ii. 1, "We ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip."

2. We must seriously think of what we have heard; which is more than remembering. There is a great deal of difference betwixt the possessing of goods, and the employing them for our benefit; betwixt the laying up of garments in our wardrobes, and the wearing them to keep us warm: this latter is done by meditation, Prov. vi. 22, 23, "My son, bind the commandments continually upon thy heart, and tie them about thy neck:" it is a phrase of speech borrowed from garments that are bound about the body; for meditation binds the word close to the heart. It is said of Mary, Luke ii. 19, that she pondered the words of the angel in her heart. And it was Paul's advice to Timothy, 1 Tim. iv. 15, "Meditate upon these things, give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all." Now, if this be required after hearing; how is it possible that those persons should profit by the word, that scarce ever think of it afterwards? It is noted of the disciples, that

though they had seen Christ's mighty power in the miracle of the loaves; yet, because they considered not the miracle, their hearts were hardened; because they did not meditate upon it, they were never the better for it. And thus it usually happens to those that are careless in performing this duty.

3. We must confer of what we have heard, and repeat it amongst ourselves, and examine the Scriptures about the truth of what is delivered. I join them all together; for so they may well be, in the practice of them.

4. We are to put in practice whatsoever we hear, till our hearts and lives are quite changed by it, Jam. i. 22, "Be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own souls." Obedience is the end of hearing, Deut. v. 1, "Hear, O Israel, the statutes which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep them, and do them." Yea, obedience to the Word must be speedy, without any delays, as it is said of the Colossians, Col. i. 6, that the gospel brought forth fruit in them, from the very day they heard it, and knew the grace of God in truth. And the prophet David resolved, Psalm cxix. 60, "I made haste, and prolonged not the time to keep thy commandments." And this is a singular frame of heart; because the putting the Word in practice immediately, is a great advantage to the hearer. For then the affections of the heart are quick and lively; which with delays die and decay. But, alas! how few practise any thing they hear; leave any sin, or do any duty! and therefore must needs prove like the "house built on the sand;" when the time of trial shall come, they must needs fall. Again, there are many, that in hearing, have good motions and purposes; but they are like the sluggard, that said, "Yet a little slumber; yet a little sleep;" so because they delay, they vanish and come to nothing: of whom, in respect of their spiritual poverty, that may be said which Solomon speaks; "His poverty shall come as one that travelleth, and his want as an armed man."

A TREATISE  
ON  
SELF-EXAMINATION.

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1 COR. XI. 28.

*“ Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.”*

THE examination which prepareth a man to receive the sacrament of the Lord's-supper worthily, is an holy work of the soul, whereby it casteth its eye upon itself, and so looks through itself; makes an exact survey and search into every corner, and takes a true estimate of its spiritual state. In this exercise a man, by the touchstone of God's Word, which is as pure as the silver tried in a furnace, doth try whether his conversion be sound and saving; and whether he have, 1, knowledge; 2, faith; 3, repentance; 4, new obedience; and, 5, love. He must also revise these graces, and consider how they wax or wain, fade or flourish, languish or are in life; that so he may proportionably prepare and apply spiritual preservatives or restoratives. But especially that he may so use them in this holy and heavenly banquet that every one of them may receive addition and vigour thereby.

And in this glass of examination, he discovers what spots and stains have lit upon his soul; what wounds or

breaches have been made upon his conscience ; what infirmities or frailties, what omissions or relapses, or new falls, have grown upon him since his last receiving. Upon which discovery, he presently pours out his soul before the throne of grace, with groans and sighs, for reconciliation with God, for restitution to his favour and protection, for his former peace and comfort of conscience. He renews his faith and repentance for them ; (for every new sin requires a new act both of faith and repentance ; ) and so prepares his truly humbled soul to receive the assurance of the remission of sins, sealed unto him by the blood of Christ in the Sacrament.

I. First, for conversion. Conversion is that holy and happy change wrought upon us by the effectual concurrence of the outward ministry of the Word, and inward working of the Spirit ; whereby of natural, carnal, and profane men, we are made spiritual, holy, and new creatures ; and from the dominion of sin and satan, are translated into the kingdom of grace, and into the light and liberty of God's children.

Now a man may, by such marks as these, try whether he be truly converted or not. 1. If he hath turned from satan in all sins, and turned unto God in all duties. If he hath left all gross sins, in practice and action ; and all frailties and infirmities, at least in allowance and affection—so that, with watchful resistance and earnest groanings of spirit he strive and pray against them, and be humbled and kept in awe by them ; and that he perform obedience to all God's commandments, though not in perfection of degree, yet in sincerity of heart. 2. If he be willing in all his purposes, desires, endeavours, and actions, to set himself in the presence of God, and to be wholly, unreservedly, and entirely guided by his Word. 3. If he can, without servile trembling, or profane senselessness—yea, with an holy comfort and humble triumph, think upon death, judgment, hell, and those endless torments. 4. If he lovingly hunger and thirst after spiritual nourishment and growth in grace, by the Word, sacra-

ments, and Christian conference; by sanctifying the Sabbath, and all other godly exercises, both publick and private. 5. If he heartily long after the coming of Christ, and love such as are true Christians; and that because they serve God with singleness of heart. And if thou desire that thy love of the brethren should be unto thee an infallible mark of spiritual life—1st, let the principal object of thy love be, his Christianity: not gain, pleasure, moral or natural parts:—2dly, love of all the saints. He that loves not all, loves none aright; yet this takes not away degrees of love: and, 3dly, love them at all times; in adversity, disgrace, temptation, sickness. 6. If his chief delight and best comfort be in holy duties and heavenly things; and that he infinitely prefer them before gold, honours, pleasures, yea, the whole world. 7. If he be truly humbled with the consideration of the long time of his impenitency, and very sorry he began no sooner, nor made greater haste into the glorious state of Christianity. 8. If those profane companions, pleasures and vanities, be most distasteful unto him, which formerly he pursued with greediness and delight. 9. If to the power of his gifts, at all occasions, he be still plotting, working, and labouring for the conversion of others with zeal and sincerity; especially those that are nearest him, or any way depend upon him.

Thus are we to examine whether a conversion be wrought in us, and whether it be true, sound and saving or not. Now, the inseparable companions of a sound conversion are, knowledge, faith, repentance, new obedience, love. The first of these graces is knowledge; at least of the fundamental and necessary principles of the Christian faith:—as, 1. Of God's Majesty. 2. Our own misery. 3. The means of remedy. 4. The nature, use, and end of the Sacrament. First, of God's Majesty we must conceive as the light of his pure and holy Word shall guide and inform us: and hereby we are taught, That he is one, infinite, invisible, and indivisible Essence, and three truly distinct persons: the Father begetting,

the Son begotten, the Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son. That he is the omnipotent Creator and Conserver of the whole world, and all things therein; the Searcher and Seer of all hearts and secrets; most holy, most merciful, most just, almighty, everlasting, without beginning or end · present in all places; the special Protector and Portion of his children. Knowledge of this point may teach us, 1, reverence and awfulness towards so dreadful a Majesty; 2, adoration and admiration of so infinite Excellency; 3, love of so great and immeasurable goodness; 4, secure reliance upon his almighty power.

Secondly, we must have a clear sight and knowledge, a right sense and feeling of our most miserable, sinful, and accursed estate by nature. Every man and woman by nature is a very stranger and enemy to God, the child of wrath, heir of everlasting perdition, enwrapped and incorporated into the accursed communion with the devil and unclean spirits, Coloss. i. 21. Every one naturally hath his understanding full of blindness, sinfulness, vanity, pride, folly, and many such like distempers. His will full of wilfulness, frowardness, rebellion, and nonconformity to the holy will of God. His affections full of wildness, fury, and confusion; his thoughts full of earthliness, filthiness, and sensuality; his memory stored with polluted notions, and the relics of foul abominations; his heart full of deadness and deceitfulness: his conscience full of bitings and stings, defiled and uncomfortable. And beside, every member of the body is enslaved to sin and satan. Thus every one naturally lives the life of hell in all the powers of his soul, and parts of his body. And he hath a fountain of original sin sticking fast in his bowels, which still feeds and fills his body of death, or rather life of sin, with a continual supply of new poison and hellish vigour. Out of this mass of spiritual misery spring naturally all plagues, judgments, and curses, both in soul and body, both in this life, in death, and in the other world. In this life hereby we are subject to terrors,

and strange astonishments in mind; to all infirmities, diseases, and tortures in body; to loss, wrongs, and oppression in goods, and our temporal estate; to slanders, disgraces, and reproaches in our good name: to discontent and discomfort in wives, neighbours, friends, children, and posterity. In death, they are to have their poor and helpless souls torn, with much anguish and painful horror, from their sinful bodies, with a comfortless or senseless divorce. They are upon their deathbeds to lie like wild bulls in a net, as Isaiah speaks, full of the wrath of the Lord. But in the world to come is the height of all woe:—not only an eternal separation from the presence of God, and the fruition of those glorious and unutterable joys, but also endless vexation and torment with the devil and his angels; with infinite horror and anguish arising from the full feeling of the whole and unquenchable wrath of God, which, like a bottomless sea, will swallow up the bodies and souls of all impenitent sinners.

Besides this knowledge of man's misery, and natural corruption in general, we must take notice of those special, particular sins, which have found harbour in our souls, and seriously and sensibly consider the intolerable curse of God due unto us for the same. Lastly, we must know how this great mass of miserable mankind was plunged into this accursed state of damnation and death. Adam and Eve, our first parents, created in the beginning of the world, planted in Paradise by the hand of God, and placed in full possession of all holiness and true happiness, did by the transgression of God's commandment about the forbidden fruit, divest all their posterity of that glorious estate, and cast us all into the gulf of sin and guiltiness of damnation. He being the father of all men, and fountain of all generations following, did sustain the publick person of mankind, both in his innocence and also in his misery; in his felicity and in his fall. Knowledge of this point should beget in us, 1. A sense of our misery: 2. Humility: 3. Heavy-heartedness for our sinful

and accursed state : 4. Restless groans and longings for relief and recovery.

In the third place we must be acquainted with the means of recovery out of that sinful and accursed state wherein we lie by nature. In this point we must know who is able to redeem us from sin, satan, hell, and everlasting death ; and by his merits and mediation to restore us to righteousness, God's favour, a good conscience, and a far more glorious happiness than we lost in Adam : and also the way and means to obtain an interest in this blessed Redeemer, and to partake of those blessings which belong to eternal life.

For the former point, our redemption and recovery from our sinfulness and misery depend wholly upon the second Person in the Trinity, Christ Jesus, the only Son of God, who was man that he might be subject to the law, fulfil it, and bear the punishment of our transgressions of it ; and God, that he might make the obedience of his life, and miseries at his death, meritorious for our salvation. Who was man, that he might suffer, die, and shed his blood ; and God, that he might break open the bars of the earth, and conquer death, and rise again. For had he been God alone, satisfaction could not have been made to Divine justice, which must be performed in the same nature which offended : and if he had been only man, he could not have applied unto us the power of his passion, or made his sufferings effectual for us.

As to the office of our Redeemer, he is called Christ ; that is, God's anointed ; because the Father did consecrate him to the office of a Mediator, and did furnish him with all gifts meet for that purpose. There are three parts of his mediatorship :—1. The prophetic part, whereby he revealeth and publisheth the whole will and counsel of God, his Father, concerning man's salvation. 2. His priestly function, whereby he works our full and complete redemption ; in his holy conception, righteous life, and bloody suffering upon the cross : and lastly, his royal and kingly part, whereby he mightily effects all this

in us by the inward operation of his Spirit ; powerfully applies it unto us, and ruleth his church till the last judgment. Those benefits which spring up unto us out of this bottomless fountain of grace, are infinite, unspeakable, and glorious ; every one of them worth a world of gold ; yea, ten thousand worlds. To mention a few ; they are these : 1. Union with Christ, whereby we are engrafted into him, and become one with him. 2. Reconciliation, whereby we are delivered from the wrath of God, the enmity of the creatures, and slavery to Satan, and happily restored unto God's favour and protection. 3. Remission of sins, whereby our polluted souls are washed and discharged from the stain, guilt, punishment, and reign of sin, by the sufferings and sovereignty of our blessed Saviour.

Furthermore, it is required that we be acquainted with the means how we may gain an interest in this our blessed Redeemer ; especially since the greatest part of the world, and even those that live in the profession of true religion, receive no benefit by him. The Spirit of the Lord Jesus, by his infinite power, doth knit us with a real conjunction unto Christ, by means of a true faith, whereby we are endued with spiritual life, and all the blessings of heaven. God the Father is as it were the fountain of this life—Christ is the conduit—the Word the pipe—faith the hand that opens it—the believing heart the cistern which receives this water of life, wherein it is a well of water springing up into everlasting life, John iv. 14 ;—and the Holy Spirit of God, by the power of the Word preached, creates in our hearts this faith, which is an holy gift of God, whereby the soul is enabled to apprehend and apply Christ particularly, as he is set forth and offered in the Word and sacraments. This justifying faith ever brings forth a zealous and unfeigned love to God, his service, people, Word, and sacraments ; and an universal and sincere repentance and amendment of life, and a longing to die, in hope of a better life.

Thus far of the knowledge of God's Majesty, our own misery, and the means of recovery. In the fourth place,

we must be acquainted with the nature, use, and end of the sacraments. The two sacraments (the first, baptism, of incorporation and engrafting into Christ, whereby we are enrolled into the number of the household of God, and of the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem; the other, the Lord's-supper, of our further growing into Christ, and stronger confirmation of the covenant of salvation, and grace towards us, whereby our spiritual life is revived, quickened, and increased in us,) are signs to represent, seals to confirm, and instruments to convey Christ, with all the benefits of his passion and blessings of heaven, unto every believing Christian; and serve as bonds of obedience unto God, strict obligations to the mutual exercise of Christian charity, provocations to godliness, preservations from sin, memorials of the principal benefits of Christ. This latter, the Lord's-supper, is the second sacrament of the gospel; wherein, by a sacramental use of bread and wine, those that are already engrafted into Christ are nourished, and grow in spiritual life, and in the state of grace. The signs and outward matter of this sacrament are, bread and wine; the things signified are, Christ's body crucified, and his blood poured out. The principal end of this sacrament is, the remembrance of the death of Christ, which he commanded unto us at his last parting from us; and therefore that ought to stick fast in our minds, and to renew continually in our hearts fresh motions of tenderness. For the last words of a dying friend beget and stir up deep impressions and dear affections in loving and tender hearts. If we read of his death and passion, that will stir and strike our hearts with some feeling and sympathy. If we have it powerfully preached, it will affect us more sensibly; if we lay it nearer to our hearts, and let it immediately work upon our minds by meditation, it will yet more forcibly prevail upon our affections. But to have, as it were, represented before our eyes a visible crucifying of Christ, the bruising of his body, and shedding of his blood, doth, far above all, breed most tender melting and

bleeding in a soul sensible of sin, the true cause of all these sufferings. This last representation Divine Wisdom made choice of as the strongest means to continue and keep fresh the remembrance of his death.

God the Father, after that great deluge and fearful drowning of the whole world, left the rainbow as a remembrance to mankind of their salvation and deliverance from water. And when he had supernaturally fed his people with manna from heaven, he commanded a pot full of it to be preserved in the ark as a memorial of so great mercy. We, being freed from the devouring flood of sin, by the blood of Christ, are put in mind thereof by baptism. And being nourished with the heavenly manna of Christ's body, have this high and holy mystery of the Lord's-supper left unto us, to continue the remembrance of his death and passion. By our participation in the grace and efficacy of his body and blood, we grow into a nearer and stronger union with Christ, and partake mystically, yet truly, of a more inward fellowship with the Person of Jesus Christ, as well in that he is man as God. Besides the strengthening and knitting faster our blessed union with Christ, this holy sacrament is a powerful means to maintain and increase an holy communion of everlasting love amongst the saints, the true and living members of Christ's body. Hereby we lay surer hold by the hand of faith upon the merits and sufferings of Christ, we feel more sensibly the power and virtue of his passion, and are more fully and feelingly ascertained of the favour of God, and the forgiveness of our sins. Moreover, at this holy banquet, our consciences, disquieted with some infirmities, or relapses, since our last receiving, (a renovation of our repentance and faith preceding,) are sweetly appeased by the blood of the Lamb; our inward peace and spiritual joy is increased; we gather ground against our corruptions, and the power of sin, and become more cheerful, sincere, and universal in our obedience. Knowledge of this point should stir us up to come, with reverence and thirsting, unto this high and holy mystery, where so many glorious

blessings are offered, and to be enjoyed ; and ever to be guests at this holy banquet, when or how often soever it shall be prepared for us. Thus far have I passed through the four points. 1. Of the Majesty of God. 2. Our own misery. 3. The means of remedy and recovery. 4. The nature, use, and end of the sacrament; a right knowledge of the substance of which is necessarily required of all that come to the Lord's table.

I will end all about this first grace of knowledge with some marks of a saving knowledge, that a man may be able to try the state of his soul in this point. For though knowledge be the ground-work of the whole spiritual building, and necessary to salvation; yet if it be not sanctified to a man, it serves but to increase his condemnation. And you may know it to be saving by these marks: A glorious lamp of saving light and quickening power of spiritual life is planted in every man's heart that profits by the ministry of the Word, and in the mystery of the gospel. First, it may be presumed to be saving knowledge if it beget humility and lowliness of mind; for the more the true Christian knows in the Word of truth, and the deeper he wades in those heavenly mysteries, the more clearly he sees his own blindness, vanity, inward filthiness and natural corruption. As the more light is let into a filthy house the more the foulness of it is discovered,—so the further he grows into Divine knowledge, he knows better his own misery, God's dreadful Majesty and just vengeance against sin—more largely and fully how many ways he offends against so merciful a Father—how far short he comes in holy duties, and in obedience to his pure and undefiled law. All which, where there is grace, are matters of humiliation and of taking down our proud hearts. In human knowledge of nature and philosophy, the deeper skill and the profounder learning, if there be an addition of modesty, the lower and more humble is a man's opinion of himself. The reason is, the more he knows, the more doubts, difficulties, scruples, and perplexities arise in his mind, which make him more fearful in his

profession, and to think that he comes far short of what he should be, though he go far before those that think themselves already excellent. It is so in Divine knowledge of supernatural principles, and heavenly mysteries, where there is grace annexed. The further we look into the Book of God, and the higher scholars we are in Christ's school, the more lowly-minded we are in ourselves. The reason is, the stronger and clearer-sighted we are to look into the crystal of God's Book, the more spots and stains we see in our souls, more purity in his Majesty, more misery in our own nature; and therefore, by the power of grace, being sorry for the pollution of our souls, fearful of his Majesty, and sensible of our own misery, we entertain a lowly conceit of ourselves. One certain mark then of saving knowledge shall be this, the more skilful in Scripture, the more humble in own conceit.

A second mark of saving knowledge shall be this: If it be joined with the conversion of the heart and reformation of the life; for a sound change of the heart and life ever accompanies saving knowledge. Knowledge without obedience is so far from being available to salvation, that it hasteneth and doubles our damnation. Small reason have men to be proud of their knowledge without practice; for though for a time they may make it serve their turn for a shew, yet at last it will end in sorrow and curses; for they increase the hardness of their heart, the guiltiness of their conscience, and the number of their stripes and damnation in hell, according to the measure of their fruitless knowledge. There are many base and degenerate ends of the knowledge which profane men propose to themselves; but the Christian must make the end of his knowledge the practice of holiness in his own life, and instruction of others in the ways of God, if he would make it saving to himself. *Knowledge*, without these ends, *puffs up* our proud nature with more pride and self-conceit, but neither begets life in our souls, nor a sound hope of immortality.

Thirdly, it is edged with a longing desire and insatiable thirst after more. For the true Christian, not resting in

historical, formal knowledge, but diving into the mystical knowledge of the mysteries of salvation, which the Spirit of God doth reveal to faithful Christians, doth there find and feed upon such heavenly sweetness, such rich and glorious comforts, that he is never well but when he is digging deeper into this celestial mine, and wading further into these holy secrets. A holy greediness after, and a continual growth in knowledge, is one special mark then that our knowledge is saving : for it is an undoubted character of all graces, where they are in soundness, there they are growing. If we have once tasted how sweet the Lord is, there will be a desire to increase more and more.

Fourthly, saving knowledge is diffusive and communicative of itself. It is in the soul of a Christian as the sun in his sphere. The sun doth not confine his light within his own fair body, but hurls it on every side ; he casts it upward, and so makes all the heavens bright and beautiful about him ; he throws his beams downward upon the earth, and there begets herbs, grass, and flowers, fruit-trees, and all the beauty and glory of the earth. He pierces further, and with his heat insinuates into the bowels of the earth, where there is any the least passage, and there engenders all manner of metals, gold, silver, and precious stones. Yet further, he glides by the side of the earth with his unreflected beams, and makes all those golden spots, the planets, in the opposite part of the sky. Nay, it is so greedy of doing good, that it strikes through the firmament into the transparent parts, and seeks as it were to bestow its brightness and beauty beyond the heavens, and never restrains the free communion of his influence and glory, until it determine by natural and necessary expiration. So that he makes as much of his light, and doth as much good with it as may be. Even so the sacred light of Divine knowledge in the sanctified soul of a true Christian, labours to enlighten those that are round about him ; to teach and instruct his family, his wife, his servants, his children, (if he have

any of these,) in the ways of godliness and doctrine of salvation; desires and delights to acquaint his kindred, his friends, his acquaintance with those comfortable lessons which himself hath learned out of the Book of God. And even among strangers, he takes occasion to insinuate heavenly matters; that so his knowledge may be fruitful, and working for his Master's advantage in all places, in all companies; nay, he is willing that those that oppose themselves against goodness and God's truth may be reclaimed by his admonition and reproofs. And besides all this, it is edged with an endless desire of doing good still. For it is a true principle in Christianity, "The performances of God's children are many, their endeavours more, their desires endless." Thus saving knowledge is ever spreading, most liberal and prodigal of itself, shining round about where it is, and working all the good it can in all places.

A second grace, touching which we should examine ourselves, is faith: I mean true and justifying faith, a spiritual jewel of invaluable price,—the very life of our souls, the root and foundation of all true comfort, both in life and death; without which it is impossible that either our receiving the sacrament, our offering up our prayers, alms-deeds, hearing the Word, or any other service, though in its own nature ever so good or necessary, should either be acceptable unto God, or profitable to ourselves. This saving faith I thus define: It is a supernatural gift of God, inspired by the Holy Ghost, whereby the humble soul, being enlightened with the knowledge of the doctrine of salvation, and assenting thereunto, is enabled to lay hold on the meritorious righteousness of Christ, and all the glorious benefits of his passion, as belonging particularly to itself.

This wonderful and holy grace is wrought in the heart after this manner. First, there is a mollifying and maturing of the heart, that it may be as it were furrowed and fitted for this precious seed of life: and that thus, 1. By the ministry of the Word, there must be knowledge

planted in the understanding, both of the law (the powerful application whereof begets legal repentance, a necessary preparative to the infusion of faith,) and of the gospel, a seasonable apprehension of the gracious promises, which draws on evangelical repentance, whereof begins the life of faith. 2. The heart must give full assent, and be effectually persuaded that those Divine principles were revealed for the salvation of mankind, and that they are most true,—the very secrets of heaven, and divinely inspired. This assent and persuasion is called historical faith; or faith of knowledge. 3. The law begins to work upon the conscience, and wound the soul by a clear discovery and wide opening of our many ulcerous corruptions, all the vanities of our life, and particular sins, and by affecting the heart with a thorough sense and feeling of the fierce wrath of God, ready to break out in unquenchable flames of vengeance against every sin we have committed. 4. The heart is stricken through with fear and trembling; it is broken and bruised quite into pieces with terror and remorse; it is pregnant of grief and sorrow, and mournful beyond the mourning of a dove. For a man in this case feels himself to be a most hateful and accursed creature, enthralled to the slavery and endless confusions of satan and hell, of damnation and death.

Thus far the heart hath been in preparing for that root of all graces, that plant of heaven, an holy and saving faith. In the second place, mark how it springs up in the mournful and humbled heart. The soul of a man being thus bruised and broken, and rightly prepared with the terrors of the law, is now fitted to receive the precious oil of the promises of the gospel, and comforts of saving grace. 1. The poor soul, being quite overwhelmed with waters of anguish and sorrow, and sticking fast in the deep mire of fears and terrors, begins to look about for comfort and succour; none is to be found in any creature; no gold nor silver, no friends nor physick will do him any good; no man or angel, or any creature, can

administer any relief. "No man can deliver his brother, nor make agreement unto God for him; for it cost more to redeem a soul; he must let that alone for ever." At last, it casts its eye upon that infinite sea of God's mercy, which gloriously streams through the bleeding wounds of Christ Jesus, upon every truly broken and contrite heart; it fastens its sight upon our blessed Redeemer, as he is hanging upon the cross, struggling with his Father's wrath for our sins, and crying at last, "It is finished;" it greedily catches hold on, and comprehends the whole gracious doctrine of the covenant of life and salvation. It considers all the proclamations of mercy and pardon in the Book of God; as that in Isai. lv. 1, "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and ye that have no money, come, buy and eat: come! buy wine and milk, without money, and without price." And that out of Christ's own mouth, Matt. xi. 28, "Come unto me, all ye that are weary, and I will give you rest." 2. After a thorough light and consideration of the great work of our redemption, and of all the gracious promises of life, the distressed soul begins to think, Though my case be wretched, by reason of sin, yet, by the mercies of God, it is recoverable: though my sins be many and heinous, yet in Christ Jesus they are pardonable. Only it now casts about how it may have a part in these mercies, and an interest in his passion. 3. Hereupon it begins to hunger and thirst after the precious blood of Christ, far more than ever the panting hart after the rivers of water. It would give ten thousand worlds, ten thousand lives, for an application of his blood, to wash away its guilt; for one drop of mercy to quench its thirst, and refresh its agonies. 4. Hence it pours out strong cries, and prayers, and supplications, groans and sighs unutterable, with such importunity, that at last it casts itself upon God's tender mercies in Christ Jesus; it throws itself with confidence into the bleeding and blessed bosom of its Redeemer, as he is hanging and holding down the head upon the cross; it hides itself sweetly and deeply in his

sacred wounds, and gored side, from the rage of satan, and the stings of conscience. And now by this time the bowels of God's tenderest compassions begin to yearn within him. He who never knew how to break the bruised reed, or quench the smoking flax, takes the panting and weary soul by the hand, receives it into mercy, grace, and favour; takes off the burthen of its sins; knocks off the bolts of terror and remorse; bathes it in the sovereign and saving blood of his own dear Son, and accounts it pure and unspotted for Jesus's sake.

Thus faith is brought forth. Now in the third place, behold it flourishing and growing in the heart. After that saving faith, with inexpressible groans and sighs, and strong cries, hath laid hold on the bitter and victorious passion of Christ, and so obtained favour and remission of sins; 1. It presently returns this blessed message unto the soul; that it is certainly pardoned, and entitled by the covenant of grace, freshly sealed with the blood of Christ, unto a crown of immortality. This being done, it is filled with joy unspeakable, and with peace that passeth all understanding. But after it comes to itself out of these strange ecstasies, it considers what great things have been done for it, what extraordinary love and infinite mercy hath been shewn unto it. And thereupon, 2, the believer presently addresseth himself to evangelical repentance; to bewail heartily all his sins, and former wicked life, not so much for fear of God's vengeance as he did in legal repentance, but with godly sorrow, for having so vilely and rebelliously grieved and offended so gracious a Father; and so doth resolutely abandon the practice of every sin, and throw out of his heart the allowance of every the least infirmity. And 3. for ever after settles himself to holiness of life and heart, a good conscience, and an universal obedience to God's commandments; by growth in which, and by experience of God's special love unto him in the course of his Christian life, and new obedience, his faith receives continual life and strength, until it come to that height of assurance, that he is able to say, "I will

not fear though the earth be moved, and though the mountains be cast into the midst of the sea." This noble elevation of spirit is the natural issue of a strong faith: which if we would attain or preserve, we must watchfully look into our hearts, lives, and consciences, that they be pure, unspotted, and tender; we must take heed of relapses, and warily prevent falls into sin. For we shall find our faith to ebb and flow, according as there is a decay or increase of holiness of life and heart.

Thus I have briefly opened to you the nature, birth, and growth of faith: and the rather, lest you deceive your own hearts with false faiths; I mean, faiths insufficient to salvation; of which there be many kinds; as, First, there is an historical faith, whereby a man is endued with knowledge of the Word, and is certainly persuaded in his heart, that it is most true, and divinely inspired. This is so far from being saving faith, that the devil and his angels excel many men herein. For whereas many men are quite ignorant of the Word, and many have but little knowledge, and give but weak assent to the truth thereof; the devils know much, certainly believe it, and yet they do more, *they fear and tremble*.

Secondly, there is a faith of miracles; which is an inward persuasion of the heart, wrought by some special instinct of the Holy Ghost, in some men, whereby they are thoroughly persuaded, that God will use them as instruments to bring to pass some strange and extraordinary things. This hath no power for salvation. Judas was endued with this power, as well as the rest of the apostles. And we see, Matt. vii. 22, many workers of miracles shall be rejected at the last day. "Many," saith Christ, "will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not by thy name prophesied? and by thy name cast out devils? and by thy name done many great works? And then will I profess to them, I never knew you, depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

Thirdly, there is an imaginary faith, which deceives and damns thousands. And that is a strong and bold persua-

sion, without all truth, ground, or warrant, that Christ is their Saviour, that they have part in his passion, and shall undoubtedly be saved, when indeed there is no such matter. And therefore it is no true persuasion, but a vain presumption, a strong delusion. And this is three-fold: 1. When men and women, living in ignorance, without all saving knowledge, upon such principles as these; that they mean well; that they do no man harm; that they pray morning and evening; build a bold and blind persuasion, that they have as good a right in Christ, as the best of men; whereas indeed they lie enthralled in the chains of damnation, and are mere strangers to the life of God, by reason of the ignorance which is in them. For knowledge in the Word of God, is the foundation of all spiritual building; without it there can no true faith be had, no repentance, no new obedience, no saving graces at all in this life, or salvation in the world to come: 2. When men entertain a strong and bold conceit, that Christ belongs to them with all his benefits, and yet harbour a liking and allowance of some sin; at least a purpose to continue in one sweet sin or other, and will not be subdued by the power of the Word, to a thorough change of heart, and amendment of life. These men think they are wiser than all the Christians that ever were, which could never find so smooth a way to heaven. But they foully and fearfully deceive their poor souls. The faith of these men is but imaginary; for it is ever the property of true faith, thoroughly to purge the heart, and reform the life; to express itself in true repentance, and sincere obedience. And, 3, When men conceive a bold and strong persuasion that Christ is their Saviour, and yet set light by the ministry of the Word and sacraments; embracing them only at their leisure and pleasure, so far as their worldly commodities, and carnal contentment, will give them leave; but not with hungry spiritual appetites, and humble submission to the power thereof. The faith of these men is but a vain presumption; for justifying faith is ever conceived, cherished, and confirmed,

by a religious, constant, and powerful use of the Word and sacraments. The seeds of a weak faith, (if it be true and justifying,) sown in the heart by the Holy Ghost, doth grow by little and little to a strong faith and full assurance ; but ever by a zealous and profitable pursuit of the means of grace and knowledge, preaching, reading, prayer, meditation, conference, use of the sacraments, singing of psalms, conscience and faithfulness in our calling, mercifulness to the poor. He that hath true faith, will ever have both an eye and heart to these holy means, these godly exercises.

Fourthly, there is also a dead faith, which is to be found in many that make great shew of forwardness in Christianity. When men have good store of knowledge, follow the Word and sacraments with diligence, are able to discourse with understanding on points of religion, have good respect to the commandments of the first table : but in dealings with their brethren, they shame their profession, deny the power of Christianity, and plainly shew that their faith is without life ; their secret and close conveyances for enriching themselves and enlarging their estates, do clearly discover the deadness of their faith, and death of their souls in sin.

Fifthly, there is a temporary faith, whereby a man may attain great and excellent things ; as knowledge of the mystery of Christ ; apprehension of his excellency ; some worthy gifts of the Holy Ghost ; rejoicing in the gospel ; many powerful effects of the world to come ; some kind of repentance and conversion ; some good affections to God's glory and ministers ; reformation of many sins ; and outward holiness ; and yet for all this, not be truly regenerate to a lively hope in Christ Jesus. But if so, what need have we to search our deceitful hearts to the bottom, and to examine thoroughly whether we be in the faith ; whether Christ Jesus be in us or not ? If men endued with great knowledge, some grace of the Spirit, and outwardly reformed in their lives, may yet have no part in the first resurrection ; where shall appear the

ignorant, the wilfully profane, the rebellious to godly courses, and good instructions? What shall become of the swearer, the drunkard, the unclean person, the scorner, the usurer, the worldling? If the formal professor, the civil, honest man, cannot be saved, where shall the notorious sinner appear? If many shall seek to enter into the kingdom of God, "and shall not be able," Luke xiii. 24, what shall become of those that run as fast from it as they can? that root in the earth? that hunt after the world all their life long? Many thousands of poor souls most fearfully deceive themselves in this point, about the state of their souls. How many do not with that gladness hear, with that reverence respect, with that reformation of many things follow, the ministers of the Word, as Herod did John the Baptist? How many have not half that zeal for the Lord of Hosts, as Jehu had? How many never humbled themselves with fasting, or mourned in sackcloth for their sins, as Ahab did? I say, how many have not gone half so far in these points, and yet think all is well with them, and make no doubt of heaven.

That you may not deceive yourselves, beloved in the Lord Jesus, I shall more particularly shew you wherein the power of a temporary faith, though insufficient to salvation, may bring forth a fair shew of Christianity, and how far a man void of saving faith may go in many things, and yet at last, if he go no farther, be a cast-away.

1. As concerning the Word, he may hear it, understand it, assent to it, rejoice in it, practise some duties commanded by it, and yet all the while, it is not the savour of life to him.
2. He may go far in faith, believe the truth and power of the Word, believe the promises, believe Christ died for sinners, yea, and hope he is one of them that Christ died for, and yet have no part in him.
3. He may go far in repentance; for he may confess his sins, he may feel pricks in his conscience, have sorrow in his heart, and tears in his eyes for them; he may pro-

mise and purpose for a time to amend, yea, and make restitution and satisfaction for wrongs done ; he may have great pensiveness and terror after some horrible act, for fear of hell-fire, as had Judas, Cain, Ahab, and such like, and yet come short of salvation. 4. He may go far in an outward shew of a holy and upright life ; he may be a just dealer ; an ordinary goer to church ; a good paymaster ; a reliever of the poor ; a bountiful house-keeper ; yet at last be turned into hell.

Why then, beloved brethren, it very nearly concerns every man to inquire and try whether his conversion be counterfeit or real ; whether his conversion be but formal, and making a fair show only, or sincere and truly Christian. And never let him suffer his eyes to sleep, nor his eye-lids to slumber ; never to please himself in any grace or services ; until comparing them with those attainable by the unbeliever, he find himself to go beyond them, and to ascend to that pitch, which no such can possibly attain unto. Else the sure foundation will be to lay, when it is too late, when the rain falleth, and the floods come, and winds blow.

But some men will say within themselves ; “ This is sour and uncomfortable doctrine indeed. What ! a man go so far, and yet be a cast-away ! and yet be damned ! God forbid. Let us have mercy, comfort, and salvation preached unto us. Let us hear how David, and other saints of God, for all their falls, were restored to mercy. Let us hear of the thief’s conversion upon the cross, and not such terrible doctrine as this.” I answer : nothing hath been delivered in this point, but that which hath sure foundation out of the Word of truth. It may, and should be uncomfortable to such as are drunk with presumption, prosperity, and security ; to those that are desirous to save their souls, and yet are resolved to continue in sin ; to all formal professors and half Christians. But it is far better for such to hear the voice of terror out of the law of God now, than hereafter to be turned into

hell with that voice of vengeance, "Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." It is far better for them to hear of damnation upon earth, than to endure it everlastingly.

As for the true Christian, this makes his heart dance within him ; makes his happy soul melt within him, and resolve into praises and thankfulness ; when he finds himself, by the sanctifying grace of God's Spirit, possessed of those spiritual graces of which no unbeliever can possibly be partaker ; when he sees that true-hearted sincerity is in his inward parts ; that impartial hatred of all sin ; that careful respect and universal obedience to all God's commandments, (which are infallible marks and characters which distinguish him from formal Christians.) For when he seriously considers how far an unbeliever may go, what graces and perfections he may attain, and all to no purpose ; it makes him more zealous, careful, and diligent to make his election sure by sincerity and holiness ; to go faster towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus ; to press on more eagerly to the straight gate, and with greater violence to lay hold on the kingdom of heaven. My doctrine then is such as it should be ; since it is a cutting corrosive to the profane, and a comfortable cordial to the Christian.

Many presume to sin with the saints of God, but they never repent and rise again with them. The falls of the saints are mentioned in Scripture, not to encourage us with confidence to sin, but to make us walk warily, and work out our salvation with fear and trembling. Look upon David, crying in his strong agonies, and anguish of spirit, Psal. xxxviii. his sin was as a fire in his bones. He had not a good day for a long time, but the grief and horror of his sinful pleasures made him cry out. He bought his sin full dear. As for the example of the thief, 1. The Lord knocked but once at his heart by one sermon, and he repented, believed, and openly confessed Christ ; thou hast heard many, and art yet hard-hearted, and unbelieving. 2. This is an extraordinary example, and has no parallel in Scripture. A king sometimes par-

doneth a malefactor at the place of execution, wilt thou therefore presume on the same? 3. It was a miracle; with the glory whereof our Saviour would honour the ignominy of the cross. We may almost as well expect a second crucifying of Christ, as a second such thief.

Thus far of faith insufficient to salvation, with which thousands content and deceive themselves. But besides this, I must acquaint you with some bye-paths about faith, which except they be carefully avoided, will lead us into misery: and these are three: 1. The first stands in excess, and that is credulity. Many, though they be sold unto sin, and swim down the current of the times, yet would gladly be thought to have faith in Christ. Though they were never humbled for their sins, their hearts never broken and bruised with the terrors of the law, and remorse of conscience; though they never once groaned or sighed under the burden of their corruptions, yet they peremptorily persuade themselves they shall be saved at last; and when all comes to all, that God will be very loth to cast away any of his creatures, and to turn them into hell. But except we be stark atheists, or blasphemous miscreants, to think that God is as man, that he should lie, we may assure ourselves that "the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God," *Psa. ix. 17*. And how terribly the Lord will come against all those, who go on in their wickedness, *Isaiah* tells us, chap. *lxvi. 15, 16*; "Behold," saith he, "the Lord will come with fire, and his chariots like a whirlwind, that he may recompense his anger with wrath, and his indignation with a flame of fire. For the Lord will judge with fire and sword all flesh, and the slain of the Lord shall be many." Let no man then, with a groundless and too credulous conceit, build too much upon the Lord's mercies. For it is a truth far more firm than either the pillars of the earth, or poles of heaven, "That to every one that disobeys the truth, and obeys unrighteousness, there shall be indignation and wrath. Tribulation and anguish shall be upon the soul of every one that

doth evil." Therefore, if any say, I will go on in my sin, and yet not be damned ; it is as if he should say, I will drink poison, and not be choked ; I will go into a plague-house, and not be infected ; I will cast myself into the bottom of the river, and not be drowned.

2. Another bye-path stands in defect, and that is infidelity. Upon this rock thousands run daily, and dash their souls to pieces. It is a secret distrust of God's promises propounding happiness to man, relying on the mercy of God in Christ. This hath always reigned in many in the world, doth at this day, and will do as long as the world endureth. Every worldling is in a great measure possessed of this unbelief. For were he thoroughly persuaded of the certainty of endless pains, and everlasting joys, how were it possible, that for a little earthly pelf, which he heaps together with much anxiety, keeps together with many fears and jealousies, parts from (and perhaps he knows not to whom) with much sorrow ; I say, that for a little such earthly pelf, he should sell his immortal soul to damnation.

3. A third bye-path is despair. I know despair is properly opposed to hope and not to faith : but I handle it here, because when a man is cast down by the terrors of the law ; if he miss of the right path that leads to the rich mercies of God in Christ Jesus, he may fall into the gulf of despair. Now presumption, though it be a contrary course toward damnation, and quite opposite to that which is by despair ; yet it is the direct way to it. When men, in the day of their visitation, are called upon to leave their sins, and yet will not entertain the power of the Word into their hearts and affections, but go still on presuming upon God's mercy ; such men as these, when they have run their race of security, are readiest to fall into despair. That God often leaves presumptuous sinners to fall thus, appears plainly in his Word : "Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out mine hand, and none would regard. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer ; they shall seek me early, but

they shall not find me," Prov. i. 24, 28. This refusing to be reformed in the day of grace, abusing God's loving-kindness, long-suffering, and forbearance, and presuming upon his mercy against the truth of his Word, and glory of his justice, make way for utter rejection and despair in the day of trouble and heaviness. As we desire then to decline these woeful miseries, and fear to fall into this dungeon of despair: let us, in the name of God, in this acceptable time of repentance, turn unto the Lord, and to true holiness, from our ignorance, profaneness, worldliness, coldness in religion, and all other sins. In this day of our gracious visitation, let us submit ourselves with humility and obedience to the power of the Word, and a fruitful practice of the same.

Beloved in the Lord Jesus, this is your day; this is your seed-time. As you love your own souls, suffer the immortal seed of the Word to sink into the furrows of your hearts, and bring forth fruit. Now lay up heavenly and spiritual treasures; (you know not what storms or tempests may befall you hereafter;) and they will be sure to hold out against the desolations of the whole world; against wind and weather, want and poverty; even against the ruins of heaven and earth; they will never fail you, but last everlastingly. Take heed of presuming on God's mercies. It is that wide and woeful snare by which satan draws a great part of men into his kingdom of darkness. He that makes God all mercy, so to dishonour him without remorse, all his life long, shall most certainly hereafter find him all justice, so that he may glorify his truth, in receiving the wages of such wilful impiety.

But the chief thing I would specially advise and persuade you to is, when it shall please the Lord, by an effectual application of the law, to bring upon your souls true sorrow and contrition, I would then have you to be very wary; for you shall then have two ways offered; you may either sink under the burden of your sins, and despair; or lay fast hold upon the Son of God and be saved. In the name of God take heed. When spiritual

afflictions seize upon you, be sure to take the right way. Be not afraid, because of the Word of truth; to the truly humbled and broken heart, Christ Jesus opens his arms far wider; the bowels of God's mercies roll together, to shew compassion with far more tenderness, than ever the dearest mother to her sweetest child. Oh! take heed of that hateful gulf of despair! Do not so far gratify the enemy of God and man! Do not so much wrong those yearning bowels of God's tenderest compassions, which never broke any bruised reed! Be not so cruel unto yourselves, as to stop the bottomless and boundless sea of God's mercies from your own souls! Oh! be not such lions and tygers, as to tear and devour your poor souls with irrecoverable sorrows! Oh! never, never despair of God's mercies! It is thought that Judas did more dishonour God in despairing of his mercies, than in betraying of his Son. Do not then so violate the sure promises of our gracious God, as to deny mercy to *a bruised spirit*; a sacrifice far more pleasing unto him, "than the beasts upon a thousand hills!" Do not, Oh! do not trample under foot that invaluable blood, by thinking it insufficient for your salvation!

It is a necessary step toward salvation, (as I have often told you,) to be thrown down by the power and terrors of the law, into sorrow and anguish of heart, with a thorough sight of your sins, and sense of God's just indignation against sinners. But after you have been brought upon your knees with the heavy weight of your sins; after your souls have melted into tears of true repentance; Oh! then take heed of listening to the bloody temptations of that roaring lion, who is then most busy to draw you to despair! Do not by any means wound the wounds of your soul with refusing to be comforted! But presently by the hand of faith, frame a plaster of Christ's precious blood, and apply it close to your broken hearts. The wider wounds sorrow for sin hath made in your souls, the more plentiful streams of the soft and sovereign oil of the comforts of the gospel, and promises of peace shall be

sure to close up your sores. God must deny himself, which is impossible; he must disrobe himself of the brightest beam of his glory, which is his mercy, before he can deny pardon to the truly penitent, or refuse to give ease to those that are heavy laden with their sins, and weary of the burden. If it please the Lord once to touch your consciences with true sorrow for your sins, and to affect your hearts with a perfect hatred and loathing of your former vanities, be not dismayed to approach the throne of mercy and grace, for with the Lord is plentiful redemption. Though your former lives have been so rebellious, wretched, and accursed, that you are able to look back upon a catalogue of sins, as black as hell, as red as blood, as foul as Sodom, yet if now in this time of grace, you will faithfully turn unto the Lord, you shall find ease unto your panting hearts, and everlasting peace unto your troubled souls.

Why then, if there be any drooping or distressed conscience among you; if there be any soul that is truly humbled with the sense of his sins, let him shake himself from the dust, and defy despair. Oh! how fair a thing is mercy in the time of trouble! It is like a cloud of rain in the time of drought. If he will go on with the great work of regeneration, which the Lord hath happily begun in him; if he truly hate those sins that now so grieve his heart; if he will faithfully forsake them, and amend his life, my soul for his, he shall be saved. And were the sins of his former vanity as great as the hugest mountains; as many in number as the sands of the sea-shore; as red as scarlet; I dare assure him, they shall become as white as the driven snow, and as though they had never been. Were his soul all crimson-red with the blood of men, as Manassch's was with the blood of souls; with the blood of saints, as was Paul's; with the blood of the Son of God, as were the Jews; yet it shall be as fair as the brightest sun-beam, and "as the wings of a dove, which are covered with silver, and his feathers are of yellow gold."

I am persuaded by this time some man's heart doth

dance for joy, at the discovery of this immeasurable bounty, and these rich and golden mines of God's infinite mercy, that hath no part in them at all; whose conceit that these comforts belong unto him, is but like a poor man's dream of gold. For I must tell you, that I dare not for my life promise so much as one drop of this mighty sea of mercy to any profane man, to any impenitent person, to any that goes on in his sins: I should so strengthen the hands of the wicked, justify the unrighteous, and bless where God doth curse. This balm belongs only to broken hearts. These precious oils are never vouchsafed but to wounded spirits. These jewels are the portions of those only that fear the Lord, "and tremble at his words," Isaiah lxvi. 2. Let them, in the name of God, take them and wear them, let them feed upon, and fill themselves with these glorious comforts, for they are theirs, and a thousand more; yea, all the mercies of God, the invaluable price of Christ's bloodshed, and all the joys of heaven.

Thus far of faiths insufficient for salvation, and of bye-paths about faith. In the next place, I come to propose some marks of a true faith; whereby I would have every man to examine himself. 1. First, We may know our faith to be sound and saving, if we find in ourselves that preparation of the heart for the infusion of faith, that breeding and springing of it in the heart, and that blessed birth thereof, which I have before laid down unto you. By the ministry of the word; (for that is the ordinary means of begetting the precious grace of saving faith; I say ordinary, because sometimes it pleaseth God to work by other means; as, by secret motions and inspirations, by private reading, conference, instruction, or exhortation;) there is ever wrought first in the soul, a knowledge of that sinfulness and wretchedness by nature. Then, upon a serious consideration of this point, it is broken and bruised with true remorse, terror, and compunction. After, by confession of its wretched pollutions, and condemnation of itself, it is brought to an holy

despair, whereby it wholly renounceth itself as unworthy of life, or breath, or being ; nay, worthy of ten thousand damnations. Thus, when it is at the lowest, by the mercies of God, it begins to lift up its eye upon the gracious promises of salvation, revealed in the gospel, and shining most gloriously in the face of Christ Jesus. Then at length out of the darkness of deepest discomfort, begin to shine some glimpses of comfort ; some little hope of pardon, mercy, and recovery ; because it sees that the sufferings of Christ are sufficient to heal all its sores. Whence immediately ariseth a longing thirst after the mercies of God, and merits of Christ Jesus. At last, with groans and sighs unutterable, with prayers and strong cries, it casts itself upon those yearning bowels of compassion, that are ever ready to bind up the broken heart, and upon our blessed Redeemer suffering for our sins. By such preparations saving faith is shed into the soul.

And thus first, we may try whether our faith be true, by considering the degrees and steps by which it grows up in us. It comes not idly and easily, lightly and insensibly ; but by the power of the ministry ; by a sight and sense of our sins ; by an apprehension of God's wrath due to us for the same ; by much true sorrow and heaviness of heart, for having grieved and offended God by our former vanities and rebellions ; by an hungering and thirsting after the mercy and grace of God in Christ Jesus ; for more lovingly than for any worldly good : these are the fore-runners of true faith.

2. Secondly, Growth in strength, and a daily springing up towards a height of assurance, is a sound mark of saving faith. Other faiths commonly stand at a stay, or else flourish fair for awhile, but after decay and die ; or else they grow only in a groundless presumption, not in a feeling persuasion of God's love and favour, and of the certain pardon of their sins ; but true and justifying faith grows from a grain unto a great tree ; from a spark into a flame, being blown by the Spirit of grace, increased by the waters

issuing out of the sanctuary, and cherished with the dew of heaven. It is weak at the first, full of many doubts and fears; but after it hath been well exercised in the means of grace and knowledge, by a zealous and fruitful hearing of the Word: by reading, conference, meditation, prayer, use of the sacraments, singing of psalms, publick and private humiliations, faithfulness in our calling, and mercifulness to the poor, it grows up to be a strong faith. But by the way I must tell you, that the most strong and flourishing faith may sometimes be sorely weakened. Faith holds its fulness of assurance, while we preserve the fervency of our first love, sincerity in our hearts, innocency and uprightness in our lives. But if we grow cold in our profession, neglective of holy duties, or relapse into sin, we shall find our faith also to fail.

3. Thirdly, It is peculiar to saving faith to purify the heart. God purifieth our hearts by faith, Acts xv. 9. Other faith may purge the understanding from ignorance, the tongue from railing and bitterness, the outward actions from gross and notorious sins, but they all leave the heart at large, to range and rove into a world of idle and earthly thoughts, of profane and fruitless imaginations. Only saving faith begets zealous and watchful care over the devices and desires of the heart. Every true believer sets himself with special care, to bridle and subdue them, to repress all wicked stirrings of the heart, and mainly to oppose all lustful, proud, covetous, ambitious, and malicious thoughts; yea, and is sometimes more vexed for having given way to some wicked thought than for outward frailties and infirmities. For it grieves him to the heart, that he should be so tainted with that hateful sin of hypocrisy, as to the eye of men, to be unrepvable, and yet to grieve so good a Spirit, and offend so gracious a God, by the sinful wanderings of his thoughts; which though no man see, yet the Searcher of hearts doth hate and abhor. Let us then try the truth of our faith, by the change of our hearts. If our outward

affections and inmost thoughts be purified, it is a certain sign the power of saving faith hath been there. By nature "the imaginations of man's heart are only evil continually," Gen. vi. 5. "But the desire of the righteous is only good," saith Solomon, Prov. xi. 23. The main streams of his desires, the course and current of his heart is to godliness and goodness; though sometimes his corrupt nature, and satan's boisterous temptations, may unawares carry his thoughts another way.

4. Fourthly, We may know our faith to be sound and saving, if it bring forth a true and thorough evangelical repentance. Legal repentance, moral repentance, a hollow and half repentance, fear and forbearance of some sins for fear of punishment is not enough. But to bewail our sins from the bottom of our hearts, because they are sins, and for conscience sake to loathe and hate all iniquity, because it is an eye-sore to our gracious God; to crush the head of our original corruption, and break the heart of our sweet sin; to part from all gross sins in action, and all frailties and infirmities, at least with disaffection, prayer, and humiliation: these are the fruits of a true and justifying faith. For no man can truly, sincerely, and thoroughly detest and abandon all his former courses and his sweet sin, before he be assured of God's marvellous mercy towards him, in the forgiveness of all his sins in Christ. But when once the Spirit of grace, by a lively faith, hath certified our troubled and trembling hearts of God's favour in forgiving our sins; when once we be assured, that that spotless and sacred blood was spilt particularly for our pollutions; then, with truly wounded spirits, and grieved souls, do we begin to look on him whom our sins have pierced; then do we hate our former rebellions, which, by the eye of faith we see, were the whips and nails, the thorns and spears that vexed the Son of God. When once we soundly believe, that his precious blood was shed for our sins in particular, then do we shed those true tears of compunction, which are the soul's heart's blood, and wine of angels,

right pleasing unto God, and joyful unto heaven. Until we have a true persuasion settled in our hearts, that we are redeemed by the death of Christ, we cannot for our lives, truly hate sin, as it is sin, and for the love of God. But when we once have clasped our hand of faith upon that glorious crown in heaven, which is sealed unto us by the blood of Christ; then, and not before, are we content to use the world, as though we used it not; then the sweetness of sin is turned into gall, and the glory of the whole world appears to be but dung, vanity, and nothing.

5. Fifthly, Saving faith is the root and fountain of sanctification; and therefore if we find ourselves to be sanctified, we may be assured that we savingly believe, 1 Cor. vi. 11. It is said, Acts xxvi. 17, 18, that Paul was sent "to open the eyes of men, that they might turn from darkness to light, and from the power of satan unto God, that they might receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith." True and justifying faith doth ever beget a sanctification of all parts, both in soul and body. By this holy work of sanctification, a man shall find himself as far different from what he was before, as a valley from a mountain, the straight from the crooked, the softness of flesh from the hardness of flint, the nature of water from the substance of diamond. For it makes a great change in the powers and faculties both of soul and body, in all the parts and passages of life. His understanding is enlightened with knowledge in the great mystery of godliness, and in the secrets of God's kingdom, which are hid from the wise, and men of understanding, and the greatest part of the world. His will is now bent to the best things. His memory, which before was like a sieve, and let out the water of life as it was poured in, is now a store-house for heavenly treasures. The stream of his affections is turned from the world towards God's glory; from the joys and contentments of sin, into a hatred, fear, and sorrow for them. His heart

is weaned from all its temporal idols, and fallen in love with eternal and heavenly things. His conscience is purged, and become watchful to discover, and sensible to feel the approach and prickings of the least sin. His hands are washed from all manner of sin. His eyes are restrained from lustful wanderings, from beholding vanity, from greedy gazing upon the wedge of gold, and his neighbour Naboth's vineyard. His ears are stopped against enticements to sins, slanderous tales, and filthy talk. His lips are silenced from profaneness, and from all evil speaking and useless discourse. His feet are fettered by the power of grace, from running any more in the bye-paths of vanity and sin.

Such prints as these we may find in our souls and bodies, if the Spirit of grace hath sanctified them by saving faith. Every branch of sanctification is a mark of the sincerity of our faith; as the goodness of the fruit discovers the soundness of the tree. If saving knowledge, love to Christians, fear of God's dreadful majesty, zeal for his glory, obedience to his will, respect to all his commandments, reverence to his ministers, joy in his promises, humility under his chastisements, a spiritual hungering after the sacrament, a sincere longing for his sabbaths, an earnest wishing and waiting for Christ's coming in the clouds, and such other spiritual graces dwell plentifully in us, and express themselves fruitfully in our lives and conversations; then assuredly the root of life, and fountain of all other graces, a lively faith, is seated in our souls. But if these fruits do not appear, our faith is not a living tree, planted by the rivers of God's blessings, but a dead stock, only gilt and varnished over like the shining of rotten wood.

If we would try then whether our faith be true or not, there is no better touchstone than the several branches of sanctification. Let us run over some of them briefly, and, with uprightness of conscience, compare them with our present disposition, 1. Do we sacrifice our whole hearts, consecrate our affections, devote our thoughts,

renting them resolutely from earthly pleasures, and this vain world, to do unto God faithfully and sincerely, the best and utmost service we can? 2. In respect of glorifying God, *and keeping a good conscience in all things*; do we scorn with an holy contempt, all profane scoffs and censures, all discountenance of men? 3. Do we heartily grieve for and bewail our sins past; not for any fear of punishment, but because they have grieved our gracious God? 4. Do we loathe and hate our present corruptions? especially those which, with sensual sweetness, cleave fastest unto our corrupt nature? 5. Do we impartially, with zeal and truth of heart, set ourselves to mortify and abandon every sin; though our reputation be never so deeply engaged, our affection never so much endeared unto it? 6. Do we still submit ourselves to the will of God, as it is more and more revealed unto us by the ministry of the Word; though it cross our former customs and worldly desires? And do we rest contented with our present estate, because most certainly it falls unto our lot by God's good pleasure, and everlasting providence? 7. Do we delight in hearing, meditating, and conferring of God's Word? And do we stand to the profession and practice of it? 8. Are we willing to resign up our souls into the hands of God, and to meet our Saviour in the clouds? If we find these fruits of sanctification in ourselves, our souls are seasoned by a true and justifying faith.

6. Sixthly, Saving faith works by love, Gal. v. 6, 2 Pet. i. 5, 1 Tim. i. 5. "A pure heart, a good conscience, faith unfeigned," and true Christian love, ever go hand in hand. If we would be assured that our faith is sound, we must feel kindled in our hearts an holy flame of most dear and special love; first, towards God, who of his own free mercy, hath sealed unto us by the blood of his Son, all the prerogatives of the saints upon earth, and the blessed inheritance of the most glorious and everlasting kingdom of heaven. A sense of which goodness

makes us prefer his glory before any worldly good, or even life itself.

First, When we are certified by a lively faith of our reconciliation with God, by the death of Christ Jesus, which is the conduit through which all comforts and graces do sweetly flow unto us ; we begin to love God for his love and goodness unto us, according to that, 1 John iv. 19, "We love God, because he loved us first." For certainly no man can sincerely love God, until he be persuaded in his own heart, that all his sins are remitted. Then we begin to consider with meltings of spirit, what an infinite mercy of God it was, that we were not cut off before our conversion, in the time of our open disobedience and rebellion. But especially considering that happy and holy work of our new creation, to the everlasting admiration of his grace and goodness, we muse how, by the mighty power of his sanctifying Spirit, he hath pulled us out of the mouth of that devouring dragon, *and snatched us as brands out of the fire*, to make us stars in heaven. What a marvellous mercy is this ! think we with ourselves, that we should be singled out by the power of the Word, and marked by the hand of God for salvation, when many hundreds about us perish everlastingly ! That such as we should be washed, be sanctified, be justified, "in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God !" Should be like a few clear-sighted amongst a throng of blind men ! Like *Gideon's fleece*, alone watered with God's saving blessings, *while the rest of the earth is dry* ! That, whereas sound Christians are very thinly scattered, "like the berries, after the shaking of an olive-tree, two or three in the top of the utmost boughs, and four or five in the high branches ;" here one or two in a family, there three or four in a village ; yet, by the mercies of God, we are of their number !

A second stair, or rising of our love, is to love him for all those beauties and excellencies ; all that incom-

prehensible majesty, purity, and glory, which he infinitely and eternally possesseth in himself; some shadows of which he hath dispersed amongst his creatures. We are not to love God only for the good we have received from him, but also for his own goodness, and for that great majesty, and unapproachable light, which encompasseth him in the heavens. Hence it is, that such an unquenchable thirst of sanctifying God's name, and the advancement of his kingdom, possessed the blessed spirits of those two men of God, Moses and Paul, that forgetting themselves, they desired *rather to be blotted out of the book of life, and to be accursed*, than God should not be glorified.\*



\* The *book*, figuratively speaking, here meant by Moses, is that termed *the book of the living*, Psalm lxi. 28, &c. alluded to Isaiah iv. 3, where the prophet speaks of being *written among the living in Jerusalem*. Moses evidently meant, "Let me die rather than live to see the evils that are coming upon thy people, if thou shalt think fit to punish them as they deserve: if they must perish, let me perish with them."—God is here represented, after the manner of men, as having all the names of the living enrolled in a book, to signify his particular care and inspection of the sons of men. So to blot out of *the book of life*, or of *the living*, is to cut one off from the land of the living. In pursuance of the same allusion, God is represented as enrolling citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, or the members of his true church, in a book by themselves, Dan. xii. 1, Phil. iv. 3, and Rev. iii. 5. In short, Moses here expresses his vehement zeal for God's glory, and love to his people, signifying that the very thought of their destruction, and the dishonour that would thereby come upon God, was so intolerable to him, that he rather wished, if it were possible, that God would accept of him as a sacrifice in their stead, and by his destruction prevent so great a mischief. St. Paul is to be understood in a sense somewhat similar in the passage referred to above, a passage which, however, does not appear to be accurately translated, for his words, *νυχουμι αυτος εγω αναθεμα ειναι απο του χριστου*, instead of being rendered, *I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ*, certainly were rather intended to signify, "I could wish myself an *anathema*, from, or after Christ;" i. e. after his example, to be consigned to temporal death, and made a curse for my brethren's sake. Those who interpret the words of Moses,

A third beam of this spiritual flame is, when we so strongly love God, that we love nothing in the world but for his sake. 1. Hence it is, that true Christians manifest their love to their children, rather in planting grace in their hearts, than in purchasing for them large possessions. 2. They love their friends, not for pleasure, profit, or reputation, but because they love God, and have his image shining in them. 3. They love their health, not because they are enabled thereby with more ease to pursue the world, but because it brings vigour to their bodies, and liberty to their minds, to serve God more cheerfully. 4. They love riches, honours, knowledge, the countenance of greatness, high places, not that they may domineer in the world, but that they may perform more good works, do more good unto good men, and more service to the Majesty of heaven. 5. They love the Word, and the free passage of it, not only or chiefly because it brings outward peace, and worldly happiness; but because it glorifies God's name, and enlargeth Christ's kingdom. Thus in a man sanctified with saving faith, the love of all other things is subordinate to God's glory.

A fourth step of our love to God, is to hate ourselves for love of him; that is, to be content to lose our goods, our friends, our liberties, and our lives, rather than to betray his truth and glory. This Divine flame doth beget in the heart of the true Christian, an holy



and those of St. Paul, as if they wished to be excluded from eternal life, for the sake of their brethren, make them talk a language quite unnatural, and inconsistent with that desire of self-happiness, which is the first law of nature. Besides, it should be remembered, that to be excluded from eternal life implies not only the loss of heaven, and final misery, but also *final and desperate enmity against God*: and that any man should think a willingness to be eternally wicked, and a desperate hater of God, can spring from love, and be a proper expression of zeal for his glory, is wonderful indeed! See *Benson's Commentary on Exod. xxxii. 32.*

contempt of profane scoffs, railings, slanders, and disgraces ; it makes the noblest spirit digest with patience the spiteful baseness of the profanest abjects. This love was hotter in the hearts of many martyrs, than the scorching flames about their bodies. Their bodies were like ours, their strength was not the strength of stones, their limbs were not of steel, nor flesh of brass ; they were sensible of pain as well as we ; but the heat of God's love within them did so wholly possess their souls, that it more prevailed to comfort them, than the flames to confound them.

Again, Secondly, after that saving faith hath planted this love of God in our hearts, it spreads itself to the creatures, with due respect, merciful usage, and moderate delight in them ; as wherein appear some prints and shadows of the beauty, wisdom, power, and glory of God : but especially to men, because they are knit unto us with a nearer bond of brotherhood by creation, and bear about them the image of the same Creator : but most dearly of all to true Christians, because they are fellow-members of Christ's body, and co-heirs with us of the same kingdom. Hereupon it is that St. Paul, Gal. vi. 10, bids us "do good unto all men ; but especially to them who are of the household of faith : " and that David tells us, Psa. xvi. 3, "All my delight is in the holy ones which are upon earth, and chiefly in those that excel in virtue." This love of godly men is a manifest mark of saving faith, and which the Spirit of God hath pointed out as such. "We know," saith John, "that we are translated from death to life, because we love the brethren," 1 John iii. 14. If any man can heartily vouchsafe his best and kindest affections to a true Christian, for this cause only, (he being otherwise a stranger unto him,) that he sees the saving graces of God's Spirit shining in him ; it is a good argument that he himself is a true Christian, and that those same graces are seated in his own soul.

Moreover, Thirdly, a man, sanctified by faith, doth rightly love himself, but in another measure, kind, and manner, than profane men : for they make idols of themselves. Their love to God, to his Word, to their kindred and neighbours, must ever yield to the love of themselves. They cannot love heartily a true Christian, only for his godliness. It may be they may affect him for his gifts, because he deals justly with them, because of some bond of kindred or alliance, or for that they enjoy outward blessings by living with him : but not for his profession and practice of sincerity. In truth, all their love rests within their own bosoms, and is spent upon themselves. God's glory, the salvation of souls, and the good of others, are served at second hand, after themselves, and their own sinful pleasures. In a word, the unregenerate man loves only himself, in plotting and providing earthly comforts, and temporal happiness. Love of all other things, and all other loves in him, are swallowed up in self-love, as rivers in the sea. But it is far otherwise with every true believer. He loves himself so, that he loves God infinitely more ; he sweetly embraces every true Christian ; he loves all other things with relation unto God, and his glory. His love unto himself is directed unto true happiness ; not mispent in furnishing himself with wealth and earthly pleasures ; but fervently employed in fitting his soul with grace, that it may live eternally in the glory of heaven.

Lastly, That special love, which springs out of nature, or some kind of nearness, (as to wife, children, kindred, and friends,) and which, where there is no grace, like a great river, many times overflows the banks of moderation, discretion, and reason, is happily seasoned and sanctified by saving faith, and made more fervent, comfortable, and faithful.

1. No man can truly love his wife, but the true Christian ; he may love her body, her beauty, her wealth, her friends, the outward comfort and content she brings with her ; but he loves not her soul, for he neither made his

choice for grace, nor, being matched, doth chiefly wish and work her spiritual good; he doth not grow with her in saving graces, and holiness of life, nor walk with her hand in hand, towards the kingdom of heaven. He loves her not for that she was put into his hand by God's providence for his portion. He loves her not, as Christ did his spouse, with a sincere, chaste, and spiritual love, that he may beget more and more holiness in her, and preserve her unspotted from the world; that as they have lived together in the nearest bond, and dearest love upon earth, so they may reign together everlastingly.

2. Neither doth any unsanctified man love his children. He may love them as they are the fruit of his loins, the hope of his posterity, and pillar of his name; but he doth not burn with that truly Christian love towards them, which begets a zeal and care to plant in them the true fear of God, and power of religion. He toils to heap up for them earthly treasures; but he is careless in providing for them durable riches. 3. Neither can any ungodly man truly love his friend. He may affect him for pleasure, for profit, for his good nature, his civil carriage, moral virtues, knowledge, and wisdom, nobleness of spirit, long acquaintance, and the like; but he cannot possibly knit his soul unto his friend's, as the soul of Jonathan was tied unto the soul of David; that is, in the fear of God, in an holy league for the keeping of a good conscience, standing for God's truth, and the advancement of his glory, in that golden knot, and noble tie of Christianity. An ungodly man's love is earthly, natural, confined, mixed with many fears, distastes, and jealousies; with much unquietness, interruptions, and restless longings; sometimes it is furious, sometimes faint; sometimes weakened and weary with the free and easy enjoyment of the thing beloved; sometimes it is afflicted with despair, by resistance and difficulty; sometimes strangled with stings of jealousy; at the best it is but a bitter-sweet, and at last ends either in endless divorce,

or in cursing each other in hell for their unsanctified love upon earth. But spiritual love, betwixt two Christians, is of a more sweet disposition, of a more lasting and heavenly nature. Their dear embracements and kind offices are interchanged betwixt them, because they see and know that they are both children of one Father; brethren of Christ Jesus; begotten again by the same Spirit; born of the same immortal seed of the Word; nourished with the same spiritual food; of one household of faith; pilgrims and fellow-travellers towards the same everlasting home; and co-heirs of the kingdom of God. And, therefore, if once true affection, grounded upon grace, seize upon their hearts; if once their two streams of sanctified love, springing out of the fountain of their love to God, join themselves in an holy and Christian fellowship, they grow in sincerity and strength, towards a great torrent, until they both are swallowed up in that bottomless sea of endless love, in the world above. The love then of the true Christian is only true and worthy embracement. 4. Lastly, Neither doth any unsanctified man love truly his kindred; he may have with them merry-meetings and feasts; but to the bond of nature there wants the link of grace, that sacred knot that is wont to tie together the hearts of godly men, so sure, that no cross or misery, no man or devil, nor time, nor yet eternity, can ever untie. And only saving faith is able to beget love to our enemies; who we are commanded expressly to love and pray for, Matt. v. 44.

Thus far I have told you what love saving faith begets in the hearts of true Christians towards God, the creatures, the godly, themselves, and to others. I have stayed the longer upon the point, because many, when they hear of *faith working by love*, presently apprehend it to be no more but relieving the poor. When they are taught that they must join good works to their faith, they presently think that only alms-deeds are meant. Whereas, if a man should *feed the poor with all his goods*,

1 Cor. xiii. and yet want a true-hearted and zealous love to God, his Word, his ministers, his servants, his sacraments, his sabbaths, his kingdom, and his coming, it would profit him nothing. If a man were never so glorious for his alms-deeds, and should not have a due respect to all the duties, both towards God and man, enjoined by the commandments, they would stand him in no stead at the day of trial.

Alms-deeds, indeed, are good and necessary, and strictly commanded of God, Eccles. xi. 1, Heb. xiii. 16; most pleasing unto him, Isaiah lviii. 5, 6, 7; and highly rewarded by him, Prov. xix. 17, Luke xvi. 9. If they be our own, lawfully come by, given with a heart purged by faith from an evil conscience, and dead works; with spiritual discretion in preferring the saints in all favours and furtherances, with seasonableness, compassion, and cheerfulness, they are a precious seed sown upon earth, the crop whereof shall be reaped in the heavens. But if an holy flame of love to God, his honour, truth, and service; to all good things, godly exercises, and true Christians, be not first kindled in the heart, by the sanctifying Spirit; if there be not a respect to all God's commandments, a delight in all holy duties, and hatred to all sins; all our alms-deeds, all our good works, are unto ourselves utterly unprofitable. These ought to be done proportionably to our ability, and the other graces to be possessed in sincerity, if we look for salvation. A good man must not only apply his hand, but principally his heart to the exercise of well-doing. There is the royal seat of Divine love, and the holy offspring of a fruitful faith, which giveth life to all good actions. Besides the confutation of a common error, this serves to comfort poor Christians, to whom this hard world denieth wealth. For love, (the fairest and loveliest issue of a saving faith,) is not placed in the purse, but planted in the heart.

Canst thou mourn with distressed Christians, and unfeignedly sorrow for their griefs? Canst thou speak

comfortably unto an afflicted conscience, and refresh a broken and bruised spirit? Canst thou pray heartily for the conversion of thy most implacable enemy? Dost thou labour upon all occasions, by instructions, admonitions, and seasonable reproofs, to draw others out of their ignorance and sins, to saving knowledge, and into the ways of God? Why then thou art very rich and glorious in alms-deeds, for so thou doest good to the souls of thy brethren; one of which is of far more worth than the bodies of all men living. Thou enrichest thy brother with heavenly treasures, which are much more precious than any relief conferred upon the body; the very schoolmen being witnesses:

“ Consule, castiga, solare, remitte, fer, ora ;”

is better than,

“ Visito, poto, cibo, redimo, tego, colligo, condo.”

*Durand. l. iv. d. 15. q. 7.*

To conclude this point, true faith doth ever in the first place kindle in the heart a zealous love to God, and all godliness; then to our own souls, whereby we are stirred up to furnish them with all saving graces; then to the souls of our brethren, that they may be brought to everlasting happiness; then to their bodies and lives, that we may refresh and relieve them according to their wants, as the Lord shall make us able; after to all creatures, as we shall see and observe, the power, wisdom, and glory of our gracious God to shine in them.

7. Seventhly, The conflict between the Spirit and the flesh, is a notable mark of saving faith. Unsanctified men are for the most part mere strangers to troubles of conscience. Satan keeps them in his chains, without any great noise or stir, without any controlment or contradiction. But if once this strong man be dispossessed of his holds, by the Spirit of the Lord Jesus, and the power of faith, then begins this sore and lasting combat betwixt the flesh and the Spirit.

But lest you deceive yourselves in this mark, you must know, that there may be many inward tumults, even in a profane and unregenerate man. There may be a combat in him, 1. Between reason and affection. Reason many times may distaste that which affection doth furiously urge upon him. 2. Between natural conscience, and natural passions. 3. Between a desire of preserving his reputation, and a delight in some infamous sin. 4. Between the fear of vengeance from above, and a purpose to continue in the pleasures of sin. 5. Between a purpose to live the life of the wicked, and a desire to "die the death of the righteous." Besides such conflicts as these, in unregenerate men, the best of them may, moreover, 6. By the aid of the Spirit, strive against all outward sins for a time, and some gross sins all their life long. But this is not that conflict between the flesh and the Spirit, which I make a mark of a justified man. This, in the child of God, is fierce, universal, and constant. It is not playing a prize for reputation, but for life and death. It is not for the displanting of one sin, or two, but for the utter dethroning of all sin. The Spirit in this fight is ever so far victorious, that it suffers not the flesh to reign. It will admit of no parley, take no truce, nor listen to any terms of capitulation; but is still sweating and toiling, and in blood to the knees, for the cause of heaven, and in the quarrel of salvation. And if it cannot so subdue the flesh as it should, and doth earnestly desire, it mourns and grieves, and buckles faster unto itself the whole Christian armour: so that ever, at length, God gives a comfortable issue in this Christian combat, and most certain victory. If it be so then, that thou feel the combat betwixt the flesh and the Spirit within thee; and after that combat, comfort by the victory of the Spirit over the flesh; then assuredly faith hath gone before, God himself is the man of war, and the Spirit of the Lord Jesus hath destroyed the power of darkness within thee.

8. Eighthly, The spirit of prayer doth ever accompany faith. The most unlearned, if the Lord enlighten his conscience by the law, and affect his heart with a true taste of heavenly sweetness, will find words to express his wants and grievances of his hungry and humbled soul. For the Spirit of God giveth utterance, opens the lips, and unties the strings both of heart and tongue, to all those whom he sanctifies by saving faith, and endues with a sight and sense of sin.

As for unregenerate men, 1. Some are so sottishly ignorant in all matters of heaven, and so senseless of their sinful and accursed state, that they never pray at all; never utter a groan, or word unto God, either for the removal of any corruption, or supply of any grace. In a cold, formal fashion their bodies may be present at publick prayer, but they cannot remember the day when ever they poured out their souls in private, before the throne of grace, or with their families. 2. Others there are, who are men of great understanding for worldly businesses, and able to discourse largely of other matters; and yet they have not the wisdom to contrive, or the tongue to deliver two or three sentences in feeling and reasonable prayer. They cannot, for their lives, hold out a quarter of an hour in laying open their spiritual estate before God. They use sometimes to cry out, "Lord, have mercy upon us! God be thanked for all his blessings!" But as for longer prayer, they think not of it. Miserable men! it is only the want of the feeling of our sins, which makes you want words to pour out your souls unto God. 3. Some others there are, poor, ignorant souls, that evening and morning post over the Lord's prayer, the creed, and perhaps the ten commandments; thinking that is a sufficient seeking unto God. But alas! this is but only lip-labour, and lost labour. 4. Others there are, who in extremities fall to their prayers, like the mariners with Jonas, ch. i. 5. But if once the storm be overblown, they are as profane and prayerless as they were before. 5. Others, a kind of

outside Christians, lest they should be thought stark Atheists, are content for the most part to suffer prayers to be read evering and morning in their houses; especially upon good days, and when they are not too full of worldly business. But this holy business is performed with such irreverence, coldness, and indevotion, that it may plainly appear the spirit of prayer is not in their houses, nor the power of grace in their hearts.

6. Lastly, some unsanctified men there are who deceive even the true Christians in this point. They are, 1. Such as either have been brought up amongst good Christians, and so, by often hearing and observing others, and being sometimes put into practice themselves, grow into a habit of praying, though it be but by rote. Or, 2. They may be formal professors, who, while their joy is in the Word, may sometimes make a fair shew this way. And, most of all, some ministers may deceive in this point even the best discerning persons for a time. For by reading books, and imitating those who are truly zealous in prayer, they may furnish themselves with a method of prayer, and may give life to it in the delivery. These may seem outwardly more fervent in prayer than some of God's faithful servants. Now, lest we be deceived in this point, let us conceive three kinds of fervency in prayer. 1. A natural fervency. Some men, out of a quick constitution, deliver things with much heat, life, and passion. 2. An artificial fervency; when men by art learn to animate their words with pleasing, fit and moving action. 3. Spiritual fervency; when a sacred flame is kindled in the heart by God's sanctifying Spirit, whereby a man doth feelingly and powerfully throw out the longings of his heart. This last is peculiar to the Christian; the other may be found in unsanctified men.

There may also be conceived three kinds of coldness in prayer: 1. Of discretion; out of which a man may be soft and sober in speech, but weighty in his actions, and powerful in his exhortations. 2. Of complexion; when

a man, sanctified and zealous in heart, and yet, by reason of natural indisposition, cannot express himself outwardly with half that zeal and fervency as he doth desire. 3. Of ungraciousness ; when a man's soul is so frozen in the dregs of sin, that he is possest with deadness and drowsiness of spirit. Now, certain it is that some unregenerate men, by the aid of natural and artificial fervency, may carry a fairer shew of zeal in the delivery of their prayer than some sanctified men, who by their natural indisposition are hindered from expressing outwardly the holy heat that lies hid in their hearts. Thus far, and in these cases, the state of unregeneration doth commonly partake of prayer. But that holy grace and powerful spirit of prayer which ever follows saving faith, and doth sweetly sustain the hearts of all God's children, in the greatest distresses, is another kind of matter.

True Christians do not only make conscience of prayer in publick, and in their private families, but they have also many earnest groanings, many dear and precious conferences, much comfortable communication with God in secret. Nay, and besides their devotion at publick prayer, their care in praying with their families, and their zeal in private prayer betwixt God and themselves, even in company, Neh. ii. 4, and amidst the affairs of their calling, they have many sudden and fervent ejaculations upon every stirring of sin, and lesser aberration in their thoughts, words, or carriages. They have many broken sighs and spiritual sallies darted out suddenly, and born of the present occasion, whereby, with an invisible fervency, they repel the hasty assaults of many sudden temptations, abominate many fearful thoughts starting up in their hearts before they be aware ; which, for their horribleness and hatefulness, they are ashamed to utter to others. They have many sudden and invisible liftings up of the heart in praises and thankfulness, upon the receipt of every blessing and mercy ; even for comfortable thoughts, which come into their own hearts ; for gracious

speeches, which proceed from others ; for many remarkable passages of God's providence ; and blessings in their business and affairs of their calling.

Now to these two latter branches of prayer ; to wit, in secret betwixt God and a man's self, with many zealous wrestlings and holy importunities, for removal of corruptions, and supply of grace ; and within a man's own heart, abroad, in company, or amidst his business, as occasion and necessity is offered ;—I say, to those two practices of prayer, in a feeling and a fruitful manner, unregenerate men are mere strangers. It may be they may have, now and then, at solemn times, in set places, (perhaps upon superstitious occasions,) certain short, formal wishes, but they are heartless and cold ; the offsprings of some custom, not of zeal and feeling. It may be, now and then, they may catch a prayer-book into their hands, when they have nothing else to do ; when some cross is upon their family ; when the time is coming for the sacrament, and may hurry over certain prayers ; but to do this with inward feeling, or to pour out the soul before God, with a true sense of spiritual wants, is above their ordinary reach. Or, if they should set upon this holy duty of private prayer, they could not possibly continue : “ for either praying will make a man leave sinning, or sinning will make him leave praying.”

But the child of God is much conversant in private prayer. His heart would even burst for heaviness, amidst his variety of trials, were it not still revived, sustained, and refreshed by an hearty and holy conference with God. There is not a Christian but he is now and then raged against by the world, roared at by satan, and railed upon by profane men. Now in this and the like cases recourse unto God by prayer doth ease his heart with joy unspeakable. He is there satisfied by heavenly inspirations ; (for heavenly inspiration from above, and our hearty groans and holy desires ascending up are as so many angels of intercourse between God and us ;) I say, he is there assured that all his sufferings and wrongs for

Christ's sake, add weight and glory to his crown of life; and that at length, in despite of all contrary power and policy, "his righteousness shall be brought forth as the light, and his judgment as the noon-day," Psal. xxxvii.

9. Ninthly, comfort in distress, joy in tribulations, glorying in afflictions, give notable testimonies of justifying faith. "Being justified by faith," saith St. Paul, Rom. v. besides peace with God, access unto his grace, hope of his glory, "we also rejoice in tribulation." By this faith the apostles "rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for Christ's name," Acts v. 41. If once we plant our refuge above, and our comfort in a sweet fruition of God, and a feeling apprehension of his presence, it will easily over-match any worldly sorrow, hold out against the ruins both of heaven and earth, being infinitely above all casualties and uncertainties. But against this point it may be objected,—first, If it be so, that such a deal of comfort is the portion of true Christians, and that in troubles and distresses too, how comes it to pass that profane men are many times more merry than they? I answer, Unsanctified men take not sin to heart; they put far from them the evil day; and therefore no marvel, though they rejoice in the face; (for "their rejoicing is only in the face, and not in the heart;" they have smiling countenances, but bleeding consciences.) A comfortable heart, and composed countenance, may be sweet companions, when inward joy and loud laughter may dwell far enough asunder.

It is the practice indeed of ungodly men, because they want inward and sound comforts in their miseries and afflictions, to fly to outward mirth to remove the discomforts of their hearts. But these remedies are far more poisonous than the malady; for they either plunge them deeper into the dungeon of melancholy, or draw over a skin, that the sore may fester more dangerously. Thus, though they look big in the world, certain it is there is no sound comfort, or "inward peace to the wicked." But it is not so with the saints of God. They have indeed

many occasions of sadness ; they are many times troubled with their own sins, with the sins of others, with the iniquities of the times, with the afflictions of the church, with doubts about some case of conscience, or with care for a right discharge of the duties of their calling. But sadness for these causes begets in their heart joy unpeakable and glorious : whereas sinful delights breed heaviness in the heart, “and the worm that never dies.” Let no man then plead for the pleasure of good fellowship, or “there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.” Let no man take offence at the outward troubles of the Christian, “for the end of that man (whosoever he be,) is peace.”

It may be objected, secondly, that many wicked men, who have not so much as a shadow of saving faith, are sometimes very bold and confident in great distresses. I answer, that confidence in afflictions, which appears in the carriage of unsanctified men, doth not spring from any sound comfort in the heart, as it doth in faithful Christians, but from such causes as these :—In some unsanctified men, comfort may spring from seeking the fame of undauntedness of spirit, and high resolution : in some it may spring from a groundless persuasion of being in God’s favour : and this may be sometimes in formal Christians, even upon their death-beds. But their counterfeit comfort doth as far differ from that of the true Christians as a dream of gold from the real possession of it. In others, a furious zeal, and an impudent conceit, that they suffer in the cause of God, may beget great boldness and resolution, even amidst the terrors of death. There has appeared in several Papists, who have suffered among us for their treasons, a kind of unhallowed fury, that has spirited them up to undauntedness of mind and courage in their death. But a man of an impartial understanding and discerning spirit would scarcely wish a clearer demonstration of the truth of our religion than to mark the difference of the ends of our blessed martyrs in Queen’s Mary’s time, and of those popish traitors. The

boldness and cheerfulness of these pseudo-martyrs, at their ends, is so formal and artificial, their prayers so unhearty, plodding, and perfunctory; their carriage so unlike the saint of God, and without those feeling elevations of spirit which are wont to fill the souls which are ready to enter into the joys of heaven, that a man acquainted with the power of sanctification, may clearly see their comfort to spring from no higher fountain than natural resolution and strong conceit. But it is otherwise with the true martyrs of Jesus. They had such an holy and humble majesty in their carriage,—such a deal of heaven, and sober undauntedness in their faces,—such spiritual ravishments in their hearts,—such grace and powerful piercings in their speeches,—such zeal and hearty meltings in their prayers,—such holy triumphs and heavenly exultations amidst the flames, that it was more than manifest, both to heaven and earth, to men and to angels, that their cause was the cause of God. In a word, the Christian's comfort in distress, arising from an assurance of God's favour, by a true and fruitful faith, doth as far differ from all the counterfeit comforts, the groundless confidences of unregenerate men, as the real possession of riches from an imaginary dream thereof;—as the true and natural grape, which fills and glads the heart, from the painted grape, that only feeds the eye;—as a strong and mighty oak, rooted deeply in the earth, which no tempest can overturn, from a staff stuck into the ground, which every hand may snatch away, or blast of wind supplant or overthrow.

Thus far of the marks of saving faith. But yet I cannot dismiss this point, without observing to you some differences between saving and temporary faith, the matter is of so great weight and consequence. Thousands there are who deceive themselves, and walk on securely in the ways of death, because they do not thoroughly try and consider what their spiritual estate is in this behalf; whether they be soundly built upon the Rock by saving faith; or whether, by some flashes of temporary faith, they flourish only for a while, like corn

scattered in stony ground ; and so, when their sins are ripe, shall be thrown into the fire of hell ; except in the mean time they come forward, from an *outward form* of religion to *inward feeling* ; and from being *almost*, become *altogether* Christians. You must here remember that I told you before how temporary faith can work :—

1. Some measure of inward illumination.
2. Some kind of conversion.
3. Some degrees of regeneration.
4. Some outward reformation.

I will then only briefly lay down some differences betwixt it and saving faith, in these four points :

First, for inward illumination. It should not seem strange, that an unbeliever should be sometimes, in a great measure, enlightened and endued with Divine knowledge ; for it is a truth clear in divinity, and common in experience, that there may be the Spirit of Illumination, with a plentiful knowledge of the truth, where there is wanting the Spirit of Sanctification, the life of goodness, and the light of saving faith. God is true and good ; we lost his image of truth and goodness in Adam ; we must either have the light of truth shed again into our understandings by the Spirit of Illumination, and the life of goodness re-inspired into our hearts by the Spirit of Sanctification, or we cannot be saved. We must have two wings,—the one of truth, the other of goodness, if we would soar aloft unto the Sun of all truth and goodness. But many certainly have but the one wing, that of knowledge, and thereby make only a fair fluttering upon earth ; but upon their death-bed they find themselves utterly unfit for that last flight towards the Sun of Righteousness. If sanctification be not added to our inward illumination and knowledge, these latter will but double our damnation. That you may thoroughly examine your souls in this point, and clearly discern whether your knowledge be sanctified by saving faith, you must call to mind and consider the marks of saving knowledge, which I have formerly delivered. At this time I will only add two more.

1. Knowledge in the formal professor is like lightning ; it dazzles perhaps the eyes with astonishment and admiration of those excellencies which it beholds in the Book of God. It commonly blasts the heart with pride and self-love. But knowledge sanctified with saving faith, is like the light of the sun ; it cheerfully opens the eyes of the soul, that with comfort and reverence, with love and praisefulness, they may feed upon the great mystery of godliness. It heats the heart and affections with true, kindly, and discreet zeal. It sends out its beams seasonably and continually, for the enlightening and reforming of others. It lightens the Christian out of all the darkness of sin, and crooked by-paths, and guides him into the holy passages of all the commandments.

2. Knowledge in the formal professor is like the speculative knowledge of a geographer. This is purchased without any great toil or travel, without feeling or experience, only by reading, relation, and discourse. He sits in a dry chamber, and looks upon a fair map, and there, with a pleasant ease and delightful safety, doth behold the rocks, and straights, and dangerous passages, without danger or distress ; he feeds his conceit upon the wonders of foreign countries, and the new-found world : with the restless pinnacle of his piercing discourse, he flies over the most boisterous, huge, and tempestuous seas with the speedy wing of his nimble wit ; he runs over the woody mountains, the fruitful plains, the spacious forests, the spicy gardens, the pleasant rivers, the rich and golden mines, or whatsoever the whole earth hath besides, wonderful and magnificent. But all this is but only in idea, without real passage and visible enjoyment. Just such is the knowledge of the formal professor ; it stands most in discourse and speculation. It beholds afar off the majesty of heaven, the wonders of God's law, the mystery of salvation, the troublesome seas of temptations, the paradise of Christianity, and many other holy parts of divinity, but it is without toilsome practice, or feeling experience. But knowledge in the true Christian, is like the experi-

mental knowledge of a traveller. He doth not only, by his reading, hearing, and conferring, fill his brain with knowledge, and his tongue with discourse of heaven, and those endless joys; but with the eye of faith he clearly sees them, and sensibly feeds upon them by the power of his hope. He doth not only, with an imaginary fruition, gaze upon "the wonders of God's law, and secrets of his kingdom, but with the keys of his saving knowledge unlocks and opens them wide; dives into their depths with fruitful meditation; and by a full insight and real enjoyment of them, makes them familiar unto himself. He takes not only a general survey of the great mystery of godliness, but by the "Spirit of wisdom and revelation," he is able, in some good degree, to measure "the heighth, the breadth, the length, and depth of it." He doth not only, quietly sitting at home, or standing safe upon shore, behold the furious rage and tempestuous seas of temptation in other men, but himself is tossed and turmoiled with them, and by the grace God passeth through them. He doth not only hear of the sore pangs of the new birth, and of the strait passage to the kingdom of heaven, but himself travels with that spiritual sorrow, and treads that narrow path. He doth not only read of the golden mines, crystal mountains, spicy islands, the coasts of pearls, and rocks of diamonds; I mean the invaluable treasures, royal prerogatives, and glorious comforts of Christianity; but himself is enriched and invested with them, and fills his soul with their spiritual sweetness. And thus far of the difference betwixt saving and temporary faith, in the point of inward illumination.

2. Secondly, as to conversion; these alterations may be found in the state of unregeneration; and there may be these conversions and yet no salvation:—1. A moral change, from a notorious conversation to a sober and civil carriage. 2. A formal change, which is an addition of an outward profession of Christianity, to a moral

honesty. 3. A mental change, whereby the natural darkness of the understanding is in some measure dispelled. 4. A temporary change, such an one as in Scripture is called "the unclean spirit going out of a man." But where there is justifying faith there is a supernatural, full, universal, thorough conversion of the whole man,—spirit, soul, and body,—from satan, sin, and earthly delights, to God's service,—holiness of life, and love of heavenly things. There is an abolishing of the accursed image of satan, and a renewing of the image of God in saving knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, both in heart and life. This sound Christian conversion, which is ever a companion of justifying faith, is discernible from all partial, hollow, half conversions, by its integrity, sincerity, growth, and constancy.

I. This change is ever with integrity of all the parts and powers both of soul and body. And though no power or part hath its absolute perfection of sanctification, yet every power and part, in every true Christian, hath its part and measure of sanctification. He is changed wholly, universally, in his spirit, soul, and body.

First, in his spirit: that is, 1. In his understanding. This, before at best but gilded over, and guided with some glimmerings of Divine notions, but stuffed with much pride, profaneness, and vanity, is now enlightened with a clear insight into the mystery of godliness, and with that particular saving knowledge which is attended with humility and holiness, 2. In his judgment: this, which before, being wholly possessed with error, crookedness, and perverseness, was wont to "put darkness for light, and light for darkness,—to justify the wicked, and condemn the just,"—is now furnished with spiritual discretion, to guide himself in the right path amidst infinite crooked ways of vanity and iniquity, and with the spirit of discerning, that he can discover the power of grace in other men; so that he no longer accounts sanctification preciseness, or that which they call good fellowship, fit

for a Christian. 3. In his memory: this, which before was water, to receive, and marble to retain the impressions of vanity and folly, but as a sieve to the water of life, and all godly lessons, is now greedy of saving knowledge, and desirous to forget those sinful notions which he treasured up in the days of vanity. 4. In his conscience: this, which before was benumbed, and heartless to all holy things, is now awakened and refreshed with a sense and feeling of God's mercy pardoning its sins, endued with a gracious disposition to spiritual exercises, and tenderness, sensible of the least iniquity.

Secondly, in his soul: that is, 1. In his will: this, which before was wedded to the liberty of the flesh, to the lusts of men, "and to the pride of life," is now weaned from all her temporal vanities, and fallen in love with eternal pleasures. 2. In his affections: these, which before were carried with an headlong torrent upon the world, in pursuit of pleasures, do now turn their edge towards God's glory, and a crown of life. They were the most fierce and furious agents for the sovereignty of the flesh; but now are crucified, and their inordinateness mortified. 3. In the desires and imaginations of his heart: these, which before were without bridle or check, are now turned by the least commandment, controlled by a tender conscience, kept in awe by a consideration of God's all-seeing eye, and confined within an holy compass, from their idle and profane wanderings.

Thirdly, in his body: that is, his eyes, his ears, his tongue, his feet, his hands, and all the parts thereof; as before they were windows to let in vanities and lusts, instruments of iniquity, and executioners of many covetous, cruel, or lustful designs; so now they are become as centinels to descry the approach of sin; well appointed to do the will of God; set apart and sanctified for the service of the new man. The whole body, which before was "a cage of all unclean birds, and a sink of sin," is

now become a spiritual "temple for the living God, and an habitation for the Holy Ghost."

II. As a sound and saving conversion is ever with integrity of all the powers both of soul and body; so it is also with sincerity, as well in the inmost affections as in the outward conversation; in the heart as in the life; in the secret purposes, desires, and conceits, as in the open carriage; in the thoughts and imaginations, as in the words and actions.

III. A sound conversion is seen by growth in grace, which is ever an inseparable companion of spiritual life. Unregenerate men either grow from bad to worse, or stand at a stay; but if once we are "translated from darkness to light," there is then an "increasing with the increase of God," Col. ii. 19; "a going on from strength to strength, till we appear before God in Zion," Psal. lxxxiv. 7.

IV. The soundness of conversion appears by constancy in the course of grace and holiness. The true converts not only grow for a little time, but continue to grow up unto perfect holiness in the fear of God, 2 Cor. vii. 1, till they are renewed after the image of him that created them, Col. iii. 10. Whereas other converts, who are led by no higher guide than the power of a temporary faith, are in and out, off and on, to and fro, in matters of religion. Sometimes they will be forward and hot, sometimes cold and formal. Their courage in good causes, and their conversion from ill, is as their faith, temporary; "their goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the morning dew that goeth away."

Thus far of that weighty and important point, concerning the differences betwixt temporary faith and saving faith; that fountain of life, and jewel of heaven, which puts us into present possession of the kingdom of grace, and by sound evidences, of the promises of salvation, sealed with the precious blood of Christ Jesus, entitles us to everlasting joys in another world.

This may suffice for the trial of our faith before the receiving of the sacrament.

✠ As for the trial of the rest of the graces formerly mentioned, or required to a right and comfortable receiving, viz. *repentance*, *new obedience*, and *love*, the author was prevented by death from prosecuting them according to his intention. That which hath been written I commend to God's blessing, and the good of his church.

A TREATISE  
ON  
F A S T I N G.

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2 CHRON. XX. 3.

*And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord,  
and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.*

THE exercise of fasting is a special means to move God to bestow blessings upon us, and to deliver us out of all afflictions and dangers. And how powerful this ordinance hath been ; First, for obtaining some special good ; see in Nehem. i. 4, 11, Ezra viii. 21, Esth. iv. 16, Acts xiii. 3, and xiv. 23. Secondly, for removing the evil of sin ; in Acts ix. 9, 11, 1 Sam. vii. 6, Ezra ix. 3, 6, and x. 6, Jud. xx. 26, Nehem. ix. 12. And thirdly, for removing the evil of punishment : 1. Imminent ; in Isaiah xxii. 12, Jonah iii. 5, 6, 2 Chron. xx. 3. 2. Present ; as famine, in Joel i. 14, and ii. 12, 15. The sword, in Josh. vii. 6, Judg. xx. Captivity, in Dan. ix. 3. Sickness, in 2 Sam. xii. 16, Psal. xxxv. 13 ; and pestilence, in 1 Kings viii. 37, 38, 2 Sam. xxiv.

But before I proceed farther in this point, let me

observe to you, in the first place, the general character of Jehoshaphat, as it is recorded chap. xvii. 3, 4, “ And the Lord was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the first ways of his father David, and sought not unto Baalim ; but sought to the Lord God of his fathers, and walked in his commandments, and not after the doings of Israel.” Yet notwithstanding this, we find him in great distress, by means of the Moabites and Ammonites, who were about to invade his land. From whence we may learn, that the people of God may fall into great extremities, and to the eye of reason, desperate and irrecoverable straits. Deepest troubles are many times the portion of God’s dearest children. It is a decree of heaven, resolved upon, and ratified by the Lord our God, confirmed by the experience of all the patriarchs and prophets, of the apostles and professors of Christ, of all his saints and servants, nay, of the Son of God himself, that “ we must through many tribulations enter into the kingdom of God,” Acts xiv. 22.

Now there are two general ends of afflictions, in those who are fruitfully exercised therewith. 1. To mortify, purge, and scour out of us corruptions and sins : and 2. To try, refine, and increase all graces in us. As, first, faith is much strengthened by afflictions ; because, they drive us with more reverence and feeling unto the means, which are wont to quicken and confirm our faith. Now faith is both in the mind and in the heart ; and as it is discerned by the change of both, so it receives further growth in both. The fire of affliction gives great light unto the understanding ; and as sharp eye-salves, though for the present they dazzle the sight, yet after, they singularly clear the eyes of the mind to see spiritual things, and discern the ways of God. When a man is drunken with worldly prosperity, or cast into a dead sleep of security, the sensual heart sends up, as it were, earthly fumes into the head, which infatuate the understanding. But when by a fast of afflictions we are freed from this surfeit, and that long abstinence hath worn out the intoxi-

eating fumes of worldly vanities, then do we recover our understanding, whereby we are enabled to judge and discern more clearly of the ways of God, and great mystery of grace.

Again, afflictions put faith to the exercise of all its vigour and powers, and make it try and employ the utmost of its spiritual abilities every way ; and that makes it grow more strong and victorious. Without encounter and assault, faith languishes, and lies hid ; but in storms, it stirs up itself, gathers its powers together, and seeks for assistance by prayer, meditation upon special promises, and experimental recording former mercies. Faith grows at such times, both in respect of a more fresh, affectionate, and sweet survey, and embracement of its objects ; which are, 1. The merits of Christ : 2. The promises of God : and 3. The providence of God. And also in respect of quickening with more life these parts of itself which shew themselves in the heart ; which are desires, extreme longings after pardon of all past and present sins in the blood of Christ : and repose and resting in the bleeding bosom of Jesus Christ.

And when the eye of faith looks through the clouds and storms of afflictions, upon such places as these, 1 Thess. iii. 3, Acts xiv. 22, Heb. xii. 7, 8 ; it is more cleared and strengthened in itself, and conveys unto the heart more light and assurance of a person's adoption. For afflictions attended with true humiliation, prayer, and a sincere purpose to profit by them, are comfortable marks of God's special favour. The stones and timber, which the mason and carpenter hew, smooth, polish, and square, are certainly chosen for building ; but that which they neglect and pass by, is to be thrown as rubbish into the highways, or to be brunt in the fires. It is so in this case ; whom the Lord doth polish by afflictions, he singles out to be stones in his spiritual temple ; but those which he lets lie quiet in the mire of the world, are fattening against the day of slaughter.

And as faith, the parent of other saving graces, is

notably strengthened by afflictions ; so by consequence, all her blessed brood receive proportionable strength. 1. Our spiritual hope is in the full tide, when our worldly hopes are at the greatest ebb. 2. Our love is more won unto God by his weaning us from the world with the wormwood of afflictions ; neither can many waters of affliction quench it, nor whole floods drown it ; but rather, being cast upon it, do (like the water in the forge) add much heat to this holy affection. 3. Fear under God's visiting hand recovers that life which it lost in the time of prosperity and ease. 4. Our humility is increased. For afflictions are as a true glass, wherein we may see our own vileness and unworthiness, frailty and infirmities ; and so humbly throw down ourselves with all lowliness before God's Almightyness and glorious wisdom. 5. Patience is the very nurse-child of tribulation. It groweth under the burden, and by variety of crosses. Job was an unparalleled pattern for afflictions, and so a matchless mirror for patience. And therefore the church confesses, " That it is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth," Lam. iii. 27 Proportionably spiritual joy, peace of conscience, and other such sacred perfumes, are enlightened and refreshed with the fire of affliction. And, 6. Repentance is much furthered by afflictions. First, Repentance for old sins is revived and renewed thereby ; as you may see, Job xiii. 26, Dan. iv. Ezra ix. 6, Neh. ix. 6, and in other parts of Scripture. And, secondly, that for present sins is enlarged. For upon serious search we may find out some special sins, which we never took much to heart before.

Know, for this purpose, that it is not enough when we are pressed with afflictions, to look with sorrow upon our iniquities in general, as the causes of them ; but also upon such occasion to search out some special sins, which may at that time move God principally to afflict us. And for direction herein, let us by the way take notice of some rules to know when the Lord correcteth a particular sin. They are such as these : 1. When upon examination we find that in the Scriptures such a punishment is denounced

against such a sin. As when affiance in the arm of flesh is punished with its failing to help us ; or pride, with dejection and contempt. 2. When God punisheth by way of retaliation, or like for like ; as, when we having dishonoured him with scandalous sins, he casts dishonour upon us ; when, we having been disobedient to our parents, our children neglect their duties towards us ; and having wronged our inferiors, our superiors oppress us ; or having been lavish of our tongues against others, are paid home with the scourge of tongues. 3. When we are taken in the very act, and seized upon when we are sinning. So Jonas fleeing, was followed with a tempest. The Israelites murmuring for flesh, were plagued with the wrath of God, while it was yet between their teeth, Num. xi. 33. So Jeroboam's hand stretched out against the prophet, dried up, 1 Kings xiii. 4. A flax-woman at Kinstat, in France, dressing her flax upon the sabbath, was burnt with her flax and two children. At Paris-garden at a bear-baiting, Anno 1583, eight persons were slain, and many hurt, by the breaking of a scaffold. 4. When our sin in its own nature brings forth such a punishment, as a cursed fruit. So idleness, or wastefulness begets want : drunkenness, dropsies, or some painful distempers : the sin of uncleanness, weakness, and filthy diseases. 5. That which thou art most loth to hear of, and that which most hinders the resignation and submission of thy soul and body to the will of God. 6. That which thou first feelest the smart of ; which thy conscience chiefly checks thee for, and seizeth upon, of its own accord, as the only Achan and author of thy present misery. So Joseph's brethren, in their present troubles, call to mind their past cruelty towards their brother.

Moreover new obedience also is quickened and enlarged by afflictions. For you must know, that by them, that fundamental principle of Christianity, "To forsake all, and deny ourselves," the sure ground-work of all sincere and acceptable obedience, is better learned and more boldly practised. Let a man never talk of being a Chris-

tian, except he be content for Christ's sake to deny himself, his worldly wisdom, passions, pleasures, friends, ease, estate, liberty, and even his life, and constantly endure the hate and oppositions, though of dearest friends, the reproaches and revilings of men. Now sanctified crosses are wont to add resolution to self-denial, for in them we see and find by experience, that no created power can comfort us; and therefore we are readier to resign up ourselves, renouncing the arm of flesh unto the rock of eternity.

Thus far of the ends for which God afflicts his people. I shall, in the next place, take notice of Jehoshaphat's carriage in the great distress he was brought into, by means of his enemies: "He feared and set himself to seek the Lord." Whence we should learn, in all our distresses and dangers, if we would be delivered out of them, to renounce our sins, the true cause of all our crosses, and have recourse to God. For he hath ever the principal hand in all manner of visitations and vexations for sin. Therefore recovery from our troubles depends altogether upon our recourse and reconciliation to him.

I now proceed, in the third place, to consider the particular means which Jehoshaphat here singles out, and sets upon, for prevailing with God for deliverance out of his danger; which is, *fasting* and *prayer*: "He proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah." The ordinary prayers of God's people prevail much. As you may see Acts xii. 5. What wonders then will extraordinary prayer, edged with fasting, work? Some kind of devils will not be cast out except by prayer and fasting, Matt. xvii. 21; that is, a most fervent kind of prayer sharpened with fasting. Some sins will not be so comfortably mastered, some fiery darts repelled, some fierce temptations conquered, some blessings obtained, without this extraordinary means; which, upon such occasions sincerely undertaken, hath prevailed extraordinarily.

And here, by the way, observe, that an holy fast is,

“ A religious abstinence, undertaken upon some special occasion ; wherein we forbear not only food, and other comforts of this life, but also bodily labours, and worldly business, so far as mercy and necessity will give leave ; that we may thereby be extraordinarily humbled before God, and quickened with extraordinary fervency of prayer, for the obtaining of our suit at God’s hand.” It is religious, or is a solemn exercise of religion, and an ordinance of God, enjoined in the second commandment ; as it is a means to help us in the worship of God, and in the duty of prayer, upon any extraordinary occasion ; and in the fourth also ; as the time of a fast is a Sabbath of humiliation, wherein we are to profess our humiliation, and testify our repentance before God. The morality of this duty appears both in the Old Testament : (for though the circumstances of the time, and certain habits and gestures, Lev. xvi. 29, and xxiii. 27, 29, Zech. vii. 5, and viii. 19, Isa. lix. 5, 1 Kings xxi. 27, 2 Sam. xii. 20, Est. iv. 1, 3, Ezra ix. 3, Dan. ix. 3, and x. 3, were temporary to the Jews ; yet the substance of the fast, which is the humbling of our souls by abstinence, is a moral duty, belonging to all nations, in all ages :) and in the New also : see Matt. vi. 16. For prescribing the manner how to fast, he presupposed the duty that we are to fast. He makes also a gracious promise, verse 18, that our “ Father which seeth in secret shall reward us openly.” Of this matter more may be seen also Matt. ix. 14, and xvii. 21, Luke ii. 37, Acts xiii. 3, and xiv. 23. It is said to be observed on some special occasion : as, for the obtaining of some special good, for the removing the evil of sin, for the preventing of affliction imminent, for removing affliction present ; as famine, sword, captivity, sickness, and pestilence. We must abstain and forbear from food wholly, from sleep in part, (as on such a day we must sleep less, and rise sooner ;) from ornaments and better attire, from matrimonial benevolence, from bodily labour, and worldly business, from all pleasant and delightful things. This

must be done as mercy permitteth. Total abstinence from meat and drink is not so strictly required, but in case of real weakness, a man may refresh himself.

In this duty of fasting, we consider, 1. The bodily outward abstinence. 2. The inward and spiritual exercise. Of the first we have spoken briefly before, and shall speak more fully hereafter. The second is an humbling of ourselves in a solemn exercise of prayer, joined with repentance, furthered and testified by the outward fast. And herein care must be taken that prayer be attended with, 1. Fervency of desire ; and, 2. with assurance of faith : and, that repentance have its two parts ; 1. Humiliation in respect of sins past ; and 2. An unfeigned purpose of amending our lives for the time to come.

This may justly bring a great deal of confusion and terror upon the consciences, and shame upon the faces of all those, who know in their own hearts that they have no acquaintance at all with this heavenly exercise. And let every sincere Christian be quickened extraordinarily, and with singular zeal to the exercise of this duty. Shall Christ fast for us, and shall not we for ourselves ? Shall the pharisees fast twice a week in hypocrisy, and we not oftener in sincerity ? Can we willingly undertake any diet or abstinence for our bodily health, and shall we not now and then set a day apart for the welfare of our souls ? Can worldlings fast a whole day for a good market, and cannot Christians abstain from a meal or two, to enjoy a more near communion with God ? Shall Turks fast and cry mightily unto their cursed Mahomet ; and shall not we humble ourselves, to seek the face of our dearest Saviour ? More especially since the benefit and profit which accrues unto the Christian by this duty, is singular and extraordinary many ways.

For, 1. If we want publick or private benefits ; fasting, joined with prayer, is the means whereby God will have them sought and obtained. 2. If we are in danger of publick or personal judgments ; this is the way to divert

them. By this means Esther saved her people from the destruction designed them by Haman. Thus Nineveh was preserved. And, 3. If we undertake any great affair, publick or private, this is the way to prepare and prevail. This course did Nehemiah take, chap. i. 4. And Ezra, to seek the right way home, chap. viii. 21. When Paul and Barnabas were separated to the ministry, the prophets and teachers fasted and prayed, Acts xiii. 3. Christ himself spent a whole night in fasting and prayer before he chose his disciples, Luke vi. 12, 13.

Now we must make conscience of fasting three ways. 1. In secret. Sometimes a private person alone is to set a day apart for this purpose, as we have examples and prescriptions, 2 Sam. iii. 35, xii. 16, Neh. i. 4, Est. iv. 3, Dan. ix. 3, Acts ix. 9, 11, Psa. xxxv. 13, Matt. vi. 17. Private Christians, in all times of the church, may have many occasions to humble themselves in secret; as, before they enter into any office, ministry, magistracy, or into marriage; in times of temptation, desertion, extraordinary deadness of heart; after ensnarement in some secret sin; declination from our first love; when we are followed with guilty horror of one or more sins, or haunted with furious enticements to some new sin, or frightened with some of satan's extraordinary fiery darts; when a man's wife is in very long travail; when a child is dangerously sick; before the communion; and before the baptising of a child.

2. In private: and that undertaken, 1. Either between man and wife, 1 Cor. vii. 5; to whom many occasions may be offered in this kind; as, when they first enter upon the government of a family; to remove some distempers, which hinder their peaceable and loving living together; for children, in case of barrenness; when the wife draws near her time of delivery; when children grow wicked, and are ensnared in ill courses, or have taken up with lewd and wicked companions. Or, 2. By the whole family, Zech. xii. 12. In time of some special mortality amongst them; when any notorious sin hath been com-

mitted by any of them ; in times of the church's misery ; when some heavy judgment lies upon the land ; or when some weighty affair is on foot ; if at such times publick fasts be not proclaimed.

3. In publick. The publick fast is that which being upon publick cause, by publick authority proclaimed before the Lord, is both publickly and privately to be sanctified of all, as a Sabbath of humiliation unto the Lord. Such a day is to be observed, and sanctified as a Sabbath of humiliation ; not only by outward abstinence and rest, but also by using the means, and doing the works of sanctification, both publickly and privately ; spending the whole day (beside the publick sanctification, and the time which is to be spent in our preparation before, and in our meditation afterwards,) in the private means of sanctification ; as reading, meditation, prayer ; and in the private works of sanctification ; as the duties of repentance towards God, and the works of charity and mercy towards our brethren. Which course soever a man shall take in sanctifying a fast unto the Lord, he shall be sure to obtain at the hands of God, either that particular request for which he is a suitor, or that which is better ; the Lord always hearing his children thus suing unto him, and granting their requests as shall be most for his glory, and their good.

In every one of these fasts, whether secret, private, or publick, we ought seriously, humbly, and unfeignedly to have respect unto, make conscience of, and fruitfully practise, 1. The outward abstinence ; and 2. The inward exercise. For the first, outward abstinence ; we ought to abstain from our particular calling, all commodities, and all comforts of this life. We must abstain : 1. From food wholly. And yet this total abstinence from meat and drink is not so strictly required, but that they, whose health cannot bear it, may, in case of real necessity, take some little refreshing, lest otherwise they hazard or hurt their health, and unfit themselves for spiritual exercises. But here we must beware that we use not this liberty as

an occasion to the flesh, pretending we cannot abstain, when the reason is, we will not. Though we have no example of this case propounded in Scripture, yet we have a sufficient ground for it, Hos. vi. 6, Matt. xii. 7; “I will have mercy, rather than sacrifice.” To fast, is not more than to sacrifice; to succour the body, according to the need thereof, is mercy. 2. Not only from exercise, but we must also cut off some of our ordinary sleep; (yet not so much as that the want thereof will be an hinderance to us in the worship of God.) On such a day (as has been before observed) we must sleep less and rise sooner, that so we may watch to prayer. 3. From matrimonial benevolence; from that society which God hath sanctified by his Word to married persons, 1 Cor. vii. 5, Joel ii. 16. 4. From bodily labours and worldly businesses; according as it is prescribed, Joel i. 14, ii. 15, Lev. xvi. 29, 31, xxiii. 32. For there is the same reason of the extraordinary Sabbath of humiliation and of the ordinary. The law of the weekly Sabbath is to be extended to other extraordinary Sabbaths: but on the weekly Sabbath we may do no work; therefore not on this. 5. And generally, from all the pleasures of this life, Joel ii. 16, 1 Cor. vii. 5. So from all pleasant and delightful things. David and Daniel did not anoint themselves at such times; as you may find 2 Sam. xii. 20, Dan. x. 3. Whereupon (saith Jerome) “Fasting is to abstain not only from meats, but also from all pleasures.” And Austin thus: “The Scripture teacheth a general fast; not from the concupiscence of meat only, but also from all pleasures of temporal delights.”

Thus in a word: we are not only to abridge our taste of meats, but also to refrain our eyes from beholding pleasures; our ears from hearing mirth or music; our smelling from pleasant odours; our other sense from the lawful use of the marriage-bed. For all these are quite contrary to humiliation. And all these are to be done, 1. Partly, as helps of our humiliation, in renouncing the hinderances thereof. 2. Partly, as signs of our humi-

litation, whereby we acknowledge ourselves unworthy of these delights. 3. Partly as evidences of our repentance; in that bye-way of godly revenge, (because all our senses have sinned) we deprive them of their several delights. And as we are to make our senses thus to fast, so our minds are not to meddle with any recreations; which would not only hinder our humiliation, but also distract us from better meditations in sanctifying the fast.

By such abstinences as these, we profess ourselves unworthy of all the benefits of this life, and that we are worthy to be as far under the earth as we are above it; yea, that we are worthy to be cast into the bottom of hell; which the holy fathers, in times past, did signify, by putting ashes upon their heads: the truth whereof remaineth still, though the ceremony be not used. And so God's children aforetime, at such times, confessed themselves; 1. By abstinence from meat and drink, as unworthy so much as of a crumb of bread, or drop of water. 2. By putting on sackcloth, unworthy the worst rag to cover their shame with. 3. By abstaining from matrimonial fellowship, unworthy of any posterity or remembrance on the earth. 4. By shortening their ordinary sleep, unworthy of any rest. And 5. By dust and ashes, worthy to be as far under the ground, as they were above it.

The usual time of a fast, is the space of a natural day; that is from even to even, or from supper to supper. For as it was the time appointed for the ordinary Sabbath, so also for the extraordinary. "From even to even shall you sanctify your Sabbath." See Lev. xxiii. 32, Judges xx. 26, 2 Sam. i. 12, Josh. vii. 6, 2 Sam. iii. 35. But the children of God, when they have been pressed with more urgent occasion, have sometimes continued this exercise for several days together. See Esth. iv. 16, 17, Acts ix. 9, 1 Sam. xxxi. 13, Dan. x. 2, 3.

When the fast is continued for several days together, upon some great occasion; (as, when a man of great use is struck with a dangerous sickness, and lies between hope

and fear ; when a man's wife lies longer than ordinary in labour ; when his child is sick ; when a city is besieged ; or on some such occasion ; the issue being uncertain, the friends of such sick persons, earnestly desirous of their life, or the citizens of such city longing for the welfare thereof, continue to fast and pray every day, till they see what issue the Lord will give :) a man is not able to forbear all manner of sustenance all the time ; and then he may take some nourishment in the days of his fast ; which may be one meal every day in the evening. In such a case we should even at those times content ourselves with a spare diet, in respect of the quantity ; and mean, in respect of the quality ; according to the example of Daniel, chap. x. 3. But when our fast is once dissolved, whether it be at the end of one day or of more, we may freely use our ordinary diet, observing always the rules of temperance and sobriety.

But let me here observe to you, that the last meal which is taken before a fast ought to be very moderate and sparing : so moderate, as that, so soon as it is taken, we may without heaviness, drowsiness, and dulness, set ourselves to examination, meditation, conference, reading, prayer, and such like religious exercises in private, as a preparation unto the more solemn exercises to be performed in a fast. Most meet it is that this preparation be in the evening, and the fast then to begin. "From even to even (saith the law) shall ye celebrate your Sabbath :" meaning a fast. So that immediately after a spare supper, all servile works of our calling being laid aside, the forenamed preparation is to begin and continue so long as we can conveniently sit up, even longer and later than on other days we use to go to bed. Then after some sleep taken, the next morning rising sooner than ordinarily we use to do, after some renewing of our preparation, the rest of the time, even till the four and twenty hours, from the beginning of our evening preparation, be ended, is to be spent in the solemn exercises of religion appertaining to a fast. If a fast be continued (as hath been before set down) two whole days, it is as

much as our weak nature can well endure, without impairing the health and strength of our body. In the primitive church I find, that in the beginning, they fasted till six o'clock in the afternoon, or till sun-setting, which in common estimation is about six o'clock. For that is the most indifferent time to measure the evening by, and the most proportionable to the whole year, and most answerable to the custom of God's people in the Old Testament. And therefore the most equal time to measure the end of the day, and the sun-setting by, for all year, is six o'clock. And that I take to have been the usual time when both the Jews and the ancient Christians did break off their fasts.

Thus much concerning outward abstinence. Now follows the second thing that we ought to have respect unto in days of humiliation and fasting; namely, the inward spiritual exercise. And herein let us take notice, and fruitfully perform these following particulars, all which concern the duty of humiliation: First, let us exercise our souls seriously in a right survey, and full comprehension of all our vileness, iniquities, transgressions and sins; this whole body of death that encompasseth us; that guiltiness we incurred by Adam's fall. 2. Let us get a right apprehension of God's dreadful wrath and flaming vengeance against sin. 3. A feeling sense of our own unspeakable, inconceivable misery by reason thereof. 4. A vile and base esteem of ourselves, abhorring ourselves in dust and ashes. 5. An inward sorrow, rending of the heart, and bleeding of the soul. 6. Let us outwardly bewail, with a plentiful and heart-piercing confession, all our sins before God. 7. Let us acquire a resolute hatred, dislike, and aversion. 8. An impregnable resolution; 9. A constant endeavour and watchful opposition, against all sin. And 10. An hearty grieving that we cannot perform all these more heartily and sincerely.

Now for the quickening of our hearts with a more feeling and fruitful exercise in these several points, consider such means and motives as these: To help us in the

first, let us keep in a readiness and often exercise some special ways of summing up the number, and taking a right estimate of the nature and notoriousness of our sins.

1. By inspection into the pure crystal of God's righteous law, with a clear, impartial eye. 2. By a thorough perusal of ourselves from top to toe, as it were; I mean, all those sins which are any way incident to any part, or power, or passage of body, spirit, soul, or calling. 3. By often recounting with ourselves all the omissions and transgressions of all those duties, which we owe unto others, by reason of those relations which we hold unto them. As for instance, a master of a family hath the first relation to God, as his Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier: then to his wife, to his family, to his neighbours, to his kindred, to his pastor, to strangers, to the king and all inferior magistrates, to those that are without, and to God's people. 4. By a diligent revising of our two catalogues of sins: I mean of our unregenerate time, and since our conversion.

In case of barrenness in this discovery, and when we begin to please ourselves, in that we find not so many notorious sins in our lives before conversion, or such scandalous relapses since, as we may see in others; let us fall upon some special points for quickening our hearts, and with a serious search insist upon, 1. That original sink, and inbred inclination to sin, naturally inherent in our bowels; as, to atheism, killing of Christ, despairing of God's mercy, and such like. 2. The circumstances of our old sins, which may make a little sin to be exceeding great and heinous, and to exceed the sins of others; which, it may be, for their outward act, were more notorious. 3. The innumerable infirmities, wants, and wanderings, that cleave unto our best performances. 4. How many ways we may be guilty of, or accessory to other men's sins. 5. The many crying and horrible sins of the time. (Holy David fetched much matter of mourning from this fountain, as you may see *Psa. cxix. 136.*) And 6. Let us especially examine ourselves by the first and last

commandments ; for the first forbids the first motions of our hearts against God, and the last forbids the first motions of our hearts against our neighbour, though there be no consent to do the evil which we think.

The first main duty then to be performed is examination. When any needful blessing is withheld, or withdrawn, or any judgment to be prevented or removed, it is very requisite to search whether there be not some special sin in us, which may damp or disannul our prayers. “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me,” saith the psalmist. That which the Lord said of the army of Israel, in Joshua’s time, may be applied to particular persons ; namely, that if they did not search and find out, and take away the accursed thing, the Lord would not be with them any more, Josh. vii. 11, 12. This the saints well knew, and therefore were wont, in the days of their fast, to enter into a solemn examination of their own and of others sins, as may be seen Ezra ix. 6, Neh. ix. 16.

For this first part of the inward spiritual exercise, I mentioned divers ways of summing up the number, and taking a right estimate of the nature and notoriousness of our sins ; 1. By inspection into the pure crystal of God’s righteous law, with a clear and impartial eye. To this purpose collect an exact catalogue of all ways of sinning out of the best expounders of the commandments. In this way of examination, begin with Adam’s sin, which, in respect of us, divines call original sin imputed ; and if we had no inherent sin of our own, this imputed sin were enough to damn us.\* Our first sin is the participation both of Adam’s transgression and guiltiness ; 1, whereby in his sin all his posterity sinned, Rom. v. 12, 19. The reason is, Adam was not then a private man, but represented all mankind. When Adam



\* God certainly will not condemn any man to everlasting burnings merely for Adam’s sin.

offended, his posterity was in his loins, and therefore take part of the guiltiness with him, even as Levi paid tythes in Abraham, Heb. viii. 9, 10. Out of the former transgression ariseth another, which I call original sin inherent ; which is, corruption engendered in our first conception ; whereby every part and faculty of soul and body is empoisoned with a proneness and disposition to evil. See Psal. li. 5 ; Gen. vi. 5, Tit. iii. 3. Or thus : This original sin is that natural corruption which is come into the world by the apostasy of our first parents, derived from them by natural propagation into all mankind, infecting all parts of men ; so as before grace and regeneration a man hath no strength to move or incline to any good, but to evil only ; and therefore also he is subject to the first and second death, till he be freed by grace and faith in Jesus Christ. It is come in the place of original righteousness, and so is a privation of that, and also an evil habit in the soul. All Adam's posterity are equally partakers of this corruption. The reason why it sheweth not itself equally in all is, because, 1. Some have the Spirit of sanctification. 2. Some the spirit only to bridle corruption. 3. Some have neither. And, 4. In some, God stirs up the principles of nature ; whence it is many do shine in excellent moral virtues.

Let us take motives to humble our souls under the sense of this inherent original pollution and body of death, from such considerations as these :—Consider, 1. The prime excellency, sweetness, and peace of our souls, of which this is a privation. 2. The universality of corruption, in respect both to the subject and object. Mark but the infinite omissions of the eye, which should, especially on the Lord's-day, like a bee upon a variety of flowers, from every creature it looks upon, collect matter of heavenly meditation for magnifying the Creator ; and how every glance thereof brings some matter of lust or sin, one way or other, into the heart. 3. Consider the vast and horrible degeneration from the law of nature it draws unto ; such as the vile idolatry of those who

worship the devil. The horrid deed of that monster of Millan, who, (as Bodin reporteth,) when he had surprised on the sudden one whom he mortally hated, he presently overthrew him ; and setting his dagger to his breast, told him, he would certainly have his blood, except he would abjure, and blasphemie the God of heaven. Which when that fearful man, greedy of a miserable life, had done in a most horrible manner, he immediately despatched him as soon as the blasphemies were out of his mouth ; and in a bloody triumph added, “This is heroical revenge, which doth not only deprive the body of life, but brings the never-dying soul unto everlasting flames.” Witness also Mahomet the Great, who (as the story reports,) was in his time the death of eight hundred thousand men. Witness that man with whom Mr. Cartwright conversed on his despairing bed, who answered him, “that since he was to go to hell himself, he would have his wife, children, and all the world, damned with him.” 4. Consider the extreme difficulty to weaken and waste this body of sin. How many a holy man strives mightily, and wrestles many a year with some passion, and yet cannot master it under a long time.\* Sometimes a sincere man sets himself against anger,† labouring thoroughly to mortify it, perhaps for ten or twenty years ; and yet, after all that time, and for all the pains and means used against it, he is sometimes upon the sudden, surprised and foiled with it. And did not God accept in Jesus Christ our striving, grieving, and hating that sin we are so haled to against our wills, and the hearty desire of our souls, how could we have any comfort ?

After original sin, actual sin comes into consideration,

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\* For want of saving faith in Christ, 1 John v. 5, and in the truths and promises of his gospel, and prayer for the influence of the Spirit, Rom. viii. 13.

† Striving in his own strength, and not seeking and relying on the all-sufficient grace of Christ.

which is, that which a man doth commit from that time wherein he knows to exercise his reason. And it is either a thought, word, or work contrary to God's law; or an omission of a thought, word, or work, commanded in that law. Or, in a word, (*ανομία*,) a transgression of the law, 1 John iii. 4. Take motives to abominate and abandon from the heart, and to the bottom of hell, all thy actual sins, from such considerations as these:—

Consider, 1. That sin is infinitely hateful. It is the only object both of God's infinite hatred and anger. His love is carried upon a variety of objects. He loves his own *blessed self* infinitely; his own Son, which is called, *the Son of his love*; his angels; his children, his creatures. But all his infinite hatred doth, with all its force and detestation, light upon sin. Suppose an idle word, vain thought, or officious lie pass from thee, the least of all these is accompanied with God's infinite hatred and indignation. 2. It is fouler than the devil himself. If any of you should have the devil appear to him in his foulest shape, he would be strangely affrighted. The least sin thou committest, I say, is far more loathsome, vile, and odious than the foulest fiend in hell. 3. It is most infectious. It hath a pestilential property, that spreads infinitely, and pollutes every thing it comes near. It is therefore compared in Scripture to things of the most diffusive nature. The first sin hath polluted all the sons and daughters of Adam that were ever since, or shall be: it made the whole creation subject to vanity. And if but one sin lie lurking in a man's heart unrepented of, it sours and empoisons all his thoughts, affections, words, and actions, and that of all sorts, natural, civil, and religious. It infects all that is in him, or comes from him, or that is about him. 4. That it is full of all fearful effects and cursed consequences; bringing upon us the worst of evils, both privative and positive. As for privative evils: It deprives us of God's favours; of our portion in the blood of Christ, (if the sin be committed with delight,) one drop whereof is incomparably more

worth than heaven and earth, men and angels; of the fatherly protection, care and providence of the blessed Trinity; the glorious guard of angels; the comfortable communion of the blessed saints, and all the contentments that follow thence; of the joy and tranquillity of a good conscience, a jewel of far more worth than the whole world; and of all the heavenly illuminations and comforts wherewith the Holy Ghost is wont to refresh the hearts of holy men. And lastly, of a crown of life, and the unspeakable and endless joys of heaven. Then, for positive evils; it brings upon us infinite sorrows, plagues, miseries, and most fearful judgments, blindness of mind, hardness of heart, deadness of spirit, a reprobate sense, horror of conscience, anguish of soul, bondage under Satan, banishment from God, and mischiefs more than either tongue can tell, or heart can think.

Again, consider that sin can never be purged but by the blood of Christ; and that so many sins as thou comittest willingly, so many thorns dost thou fasten upon his head; so many nails dost thou drive into his hands and feet; so many spears dost thou thrust into his heart; so oft (merciless villain! let me speak so, for the love of my dear Redeemer!) dost thou embrue thy wicked hands in his precious blood, and with prodigious profaneness trample it under thy feet! So that it may justly be said unto thee, as Peter said to the Jews, "Thou hast crucified the Lord of life; thou hast murdered the King of Glory, the Son of the everlasting God, Christ Jesus, that Just and Holy One;" and preferred, not Barabbas, but thine own sinful lusts,—nay, the devil himself, before our blessed Redeemer. Let these and the like considerations serve to aggravate our actual sins, and so move us to suffer our hearts to be wounded and broken in pieces for them.

Proceed now, and peruse seriously the soundest exposition upon the commandments, and lay thy life to this holy rule and line. To give an entrance into this, let us consider, 1. How we have villanously struck at the pure eye of God the Father's glory all our life long, with many

filthy thoughts, abominable lusts, and fearful provocations. How we have shamefully abused the riches of his goodness, forbearance and long-suffering, which should have led us to repentance. How cruelly we have neglected so great salvation, by not offering ourselves to his gracious embracements, stretching out his arms unto us ever since we were born. 2. How fearfully we have dishonoured his dear Son, by despising him in his ministry, persecuting him in his members, and shedding his blood in the sacrament. 3. What execrable indignity we have offered to the blessed Spirit of God, by grieving, quenching, if not doing despite to him, by accursedly rejecting his many holy motions, or smothering them by worldliness, lust, or some sensual rebellion; by withstanding that light which stood against us like an armed man when we went about sin; nay, and it may be by scoffing at religion, (horrible villany!) and railing against purity and the ways of God. 4. How wretchedly we have wronged these heavenly creatures, the angels of God, by robbing them a long time of that joy they would have conceived at our conversion, Luke xv. 7. By making choice of the damned fiends (who continually roared about us like so many greedy lions to swallow us up quick, 1 Pet. v. 8,) to be our attendants; whereas the other blessed and glorious spirits tendered their attendance, and would gladly have been our guardians. 5. How we have unworthily abused all the creatures, by adding, so much as in us lies, burden unto their bondage, and grievousness unto the groans which they make for deliverance out of that vanity to which our sins have made them subject; and by want of conscience and care to have them sanctified unto us by the Word and prayer. 6. How we have abused many seasonable afflictions and visitations laid upon us for our good. 7. How abominably we have abandoned our bodies to serve satan, and all the parts and members thereof as instruments of unrighteousness to sin; our eyes to wicked wandering, wantonness, adulteries, covetousness, and idle gazings. They

ought, all the days of our life, to have gathered from the creatures, and all the works of God, abundance of sweet matter for Divine meditation upon the goodness, greatness, excellency and perfections of our blessed Creator. But they have wickedly served us, as windows set wide, open to let in a world of wild-fire to inflame our already naughty hearts, with lust, speculative filth, and many vicious and vile affections. Our ears, to delight in idle talk, nay, filthy jests, slanderous reports, and other unsavoury communications. They might have served to have done God a great deal of service. All which we heard should have fallen through our ears into our hearts, as seeds of prayer or praise, or some other profitable employment of some holy affection; but in many companies they have drank in false accusations, slanders, and whisperings, as matter of unnecessary suspicions, ill-will, and heart-burning, if not revenge.

Our tongues, “to set on fire the course of nature:” besides a world of other iniquity, to blaspheme (prodigious villany!) the glorious name of the mighty Lord of heaven and earth, and to wound the good name of others. Here then punctually peruse, with a broken heart and bleeding affections, those many kinds of the sins of the tongue, whereof every one of us, no doubt, at one time or other, have been deeply guilty.

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Blasphemy.</li> <li>2. Murmuring.</li> <li>3. Defence of sin.</li> <li>4. Perjury and swearing.</li> <li>5. Lying, equivocation, and mental reserving.</li> <li>6. Slandering, tale-telling, and raising of rumours.</li> <li>7. Flattery and double-tonguedness.</li> <li>8. Cursing, railing, and reviling.</li> <li>9. Brawling and scolding.</li> <li>10. Scoffing, mocking, deriding, scurrility and foolish jesting.</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11. Giving ill counsel.</li> <li>12. Sowing seeds of discord among neighbours.</li> <li>13. Boasting, loquacity, and talkativeness.</li> <li>14. Discovering of secrets.</li> <li>15. Hasty and indiscreet threatening.</li> <li>16. Rash promises and vows.</li> <li>17. Idle words and filthy talking.</li> <li>18. Sinful silence.</li> <li>19. Rash censuring, malicious informing and whispering.</li> </ol> |
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Thus go on ; and more particularly and exactly survey the several sins of every other part.

8. Consider how wofully we have wronged (which is worst of all,) our own poor, immortal souls, by mis-employing all the powers and faculties thereof to serve satan and ourselves, by fastening upon them, with self-destroying cruelty, so many mortal wounds, that without bathing in the bloody wounds of Jesus Christ, will bleed to everlasting death. Our minds might very well have been by this time as full as the moon with spiritual understanding in the mystery of Christ, and plentifully enriched with much saving knowledge. But a long time they lay in the darkest midnight of ignorance, in respect of any such sacred skill, and gave us light only to do ill, and grow wise in wickedness. Nay, and since they have been something enlightened, we have been extremely slothful in furnishing them with that excellence, and variety of knowledge, which if we had improved all means, and blessed opportunities, they might have happily attained. Our memories might have been rich and royal treasures of many spiritual and divine lessons, comfortable cordials, holy experiences, heavenly pearls ; but in our vain days we filled them full of impertinent stuff, idle jests, foolish conceits, unnumbered notions of vanity and folly. Nay, and since they were in some measure sanctified, we have found in them, which is a grievous thing, more aptness and strength to receive and keep matters of this world, than affairs of heaven, and the most material concernments of our own souls. Our hearts, whose only object should have been things honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report, have been empoisoned, restless fountains of all ill, the source and nurseries of innumerable, vain, and vile thoughts and affections : in regard of malicious thoughts, very slaughter-houses ; in regard of unclean lusts, very stews ; in regard of the heat of boiling concupiscence, as the prophet speaks, like a baker's oven. Nay, and since they have been habitations of the Holy Ghost, we may be sore

ashamed to consider the want of watchfulness, purity, and heavenly-mindedness, which ought to have attended such a glorious guest ; and which is yet more the assaults of lust, passion, and many loathsome intrusions of most unworthy thoughts.

All our affections have been most notorious and stirring agents for the devil. Every one transported in every thing the wrong way. Our sorrow, which should have wholly been spent upon sin, hath been mispent upon earthly losses, about things of this life, and when we have been crossed in our sensual desires, which are no fit matter for mourning. Nay, whereas since conversion, that commandment lies upon us, “ Rejoice evermore,” 1 Thess. v. 16. We have basely suffered our hearts to be unnecessarily dejected with false fears and distrusts. Our joy should have been in Jehovah, blessed for ever, in his name, his Word, his works, and ways. It should have been exercised upon everlasting heavenly objects, which would have enlarged it to that which is unspeakable and glorious. The matter of it should have been, 1. God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. 2. Our own salvation. 3. The prosperity of the church. 4. The sufferings of Christ. 5. All the gifts of God. But in all our sinful and sensual time, it was unhappily spent upon froth and folly ; at the best, upon corn, and wine, and oil, things fading and transitory ; so that, in the heat and height of it, we might truly have said of it, as Solomon of laughter, “ It is mad.” Nay, since we have been translated into God’s marvellous light, we have sinned in suffering it to be damped upon the approach of any little trouble, and in not exercising and enlarging it with more exaltation, sweetness, and refreshing about the things of God, and assurance of our salvation. Our love, which should have warmed our hearts with an holy flame towards God, (who, of his own free mercy, hath sealed unto us, by the blood of his Son, all the prerogatives of his saints upon earth, and the blessed inheritance of the everlasting kingdom of heaven, a sense of which should

make us to prefer his glory before life itself;) in our wicked days was wholly employed in providing sensually for ourselves. And ever since, by the mighty working of Christ's Spirit, we have in some measure, set our love aright, we cannot, without a great deal of grief and shame, think upon the faintness, inconstancy, and coldness of it towards God, Christ, his Word, works, creatures, sabbaths, sacraments, ministers, services, children, presence, corrections, and coming. Our hatred, which all should have been spent upon sin, hath been bent against the best things in the world; even against holiness itself, as though it were hypocrisy; against godliness, as though it were a sect; against God's faithful ministers, as though they were the troublers of the state, messengers of evil things, and our enemies. Our consciences, which should have been registers and remembrancers unto us of many heavenly thoughts, gracious speeches, godly actions, sanctified sabbaths, holy prayers, Divine meditations, Christian conferences, days of humiliation, righteous dealing with our brethren, works of justice, mercy, and truth, a sincere respect to all God's commandments, a careful performance of all spiritual duties, a seasonable exercise of every grace, hatred of all false ways, and hearty and invincible love unto God, and all things that he loves. Instead of such comfortable provision against the evil day, naturally we hoard up in them, scourges, stings, and scorpions, infinite matter of unspeakable horror; I mean, consciousness of many villanies, vanities, and lies, oaths, whoredoms, revellings, matches, falsehoods, idle talk, scoffs, and railings. Now all these, except, by timely repentance, we confess and forsake them, lurk in the bosom of our guilty consciences, like so many sleeping lions, gathering hellish poison and power, that hereafter they may sting with everlasting horror and endless torment.

3. Let us diligently revise our whole life, and carefully peruse our two catalogues of sin; I mean those of our unregenerate time, and those committed since our con-

version : such are, 1. All the 'abominations of the days of our vanity 2. Our failings in our translation from darkness to light. 3. Our relapses, falls, and frailties since.

To prepare our hearts with quickening matter for penitent remorse and sound humiliation ; for the first of these, let us take notice of, 1. Our omissions in that graceless time, which were as large as the duties enjoined in God's blessed laws. Now what grievous amazements may it breed in our hearts, if truly penitent, to think seriously, that for all the time of our unregeneration, which perhaps was twenty or thirty years, having so great and good a God in heaven, we yet, for all that time, should do him no service at all, neither perform any duty unto him, (or but so, that it was abominable in his sight,) of all those which he required in his blessed book, and which we did infinitely owe, being his creatures, and bound unto him besides by infinite obligations, every moment. For instance : we may now acknowledge, by the present sweetness and preciousness of the spirit of prayer, what an horrible neglect it was of so long a time, not to offer up any one acceptable sacrifice in that kind. We may conceive by our high esteem of the Lord's day, by that sweet communion we have at such times with his holy Majesty, and Jesus Christ, through the secret working of the blessed Spirit, and exercise of faith in the ordinances, what accursed creatures we were, and what an horrible sin it was, to have continued wilful strangers to every duty of such heavenly days, so many years together ; nay, to have desperately profaned them by works of our calling, pastimes, or idleness. Go on thus, and aggravate all other omissions. Omission of the duties of charity, kindness, and love to the brethren of Christ, without any more sin, justly merits that dreadful doom, Matt. xxv. 41, and is able of itself to damn thee for ever.

2. All our actual sins committed in thought, word, or

deed, seriously and sensibly searching out, with an impartial, eager pursuit, their heinousness and number. And in this penitent survey, let us consider which way the current of our thoughts have been principally carried; whether upon lust, ambition, or pride: whereupon principally our words have been wickedly wasted; whether in lying, swearing, slandering, filthy talking, or jesting: what sinful courses we have followed most; whether drunkenness, whoredom, gaming, sabbath-breaking, revellings, or the like. Thus let us mark wherein we have had our hearts, tongues, and hands deepest in hell, and done satan the most service, that we may mourn proportionably, and fortify ourselves for the time to come, with answerable watchfulness and industry.

Again, Let us divide that dark and miserable time into its portions and periods, according to the several places, conditions, and callings, wherein we have passed it: thus, so much time spent at home in our father's house; so much in service or apprenticeship; so much at school; so much at the university; so much at the inns of court; so much in the country; so much in single life; so much in the marriage state; so much privately; so much in this or that office; so much in this town or parish; so much in that. And let us well weigh the several corruptions, vices, and sinful pleasures, to which we were most given, in those distinct places, times, callings, and conditions of life; that so we may proceed in better order to break our hearts before God for them: beginning with the first actual sin, to which our now awakened memory, and the spirit of repentance, can lead us. Nay, and to help us herein, let us take from our mothers or nurses, what they can report unto us of that time, wherein we cannot remember ourselves to have lived; and also conjecture, from the froward behaviour of other infants, which we now observe, how untoward our own carriage was at that age. And then let us proceed to enumerate all the circumstances of our old sins, to aggravate and

make them as odious and loathsome in our eyes as we can, for a more thorough humbling of our souls. Suppose, in the time of thy darkness, thou wast a drunkard, weigh well, besides the beastly sin of drunkenness itself, such circumstances as these ; 1. How thou grievest thy parents and friends, (or wife and children, if thou livedst in the married estate.) 2. How thou didst mis-spend thy precious time in ale-houses, the nurseries of the devil, for one moment whereof any damned soul in hell would give ten thousand worlds.. 3. How thou didst meet there a company of sons of Belial, thy brethren in iniquity, and madest them every time, so much as in thee lay, more the children of hell than they were before. 4. How wickedly thou didst waste God's good creatures, for which many thousands were ready to starve. 5. How thou didst wickedly cast away that money, by which thou mightest have maintained thy family, provided for thy children, and relieved the poor. 6. How before you parted, thou didst put thyself out of the rank of mankind, by turning beast. 7 How you swore, blasphemed God's name, railed upon good men ; perhaps roared, and played the bedlamites. 8. That when towards bed-time thou shouldst have prostrated thyself amidst thy people, to have offered up an evening sacrifice of prayer and praise, thou laidst all along like a filthy hog, wallowing in thine own vomit, offering up thy body and soul a cursed sacrifice to the devil.

Again, Let us consider how many we have, not only like wolves undone, so much as in us lay, in their outward estate ; but even like devils drawn them to hell, and held them fast in a damned estate : how many ways we have been guilty of or accessory to other men's sins ; whether, 1. By commanding, as David did Joab ; or 2. By commending ; 3. By consenting ; 4. By accompanying ; 5. By conniving ; 6. By counselling ; 7 By defending ; 8. By encouraging ; 9. By provoking ; or, 10. By participating with others in their wickedness. Above all, let us spend much time and many tears in pressing upon

our consciences, the infinite outrages, excesses, and tyrannies of our bosom sin ; which reigned and raged in us far more than any of the rest. It was the devil's viceroy, to keep in a miserable slavery all the faculties of the soul, all the thoughts of the heart, the heat of our affections, the strength of our wit, for his more notorious service. I know not whether this sometimes, by reason of its vile nature, universal domineering, and giving life and motion to a world of wicked means, ways, and circumstances, may not hold scale against all our other sins. And therefore we have the more need of strict examination to discover it; of more brokenness of heart to lament it; of Christ's dearest blood to pardon it; and of the Holy Spirit's mightiest work to mortify and subdue it.

Secondly, In order to get matter of humiliation for the second kind of sins, that is, our failings in our translation from darkness to light; let us call to mind and consider, 1. Our loathness to leave satan's service, and to submit to the sceptre of Christ; our extreme cruelty, even to our poor immortal souls, in withstanding, so much as in us lay, the very work of grace, and our everlasting good, the ministry, holy motions, and all other means, set on foot by God's Spirit, to lead us out of hell; our listening, even when Christ called, to the subtle suggestions and cries of our own corruptions, the devil, and our old companions. 2. The great disproportion between the notorious wickedness of our former life, and bewailing it; between the number of our sins, and fewness of our tears; the heinousness of our rebellions, and little measure of our humiliation. And what a fresh spring of new penitent sorrow may this create, to consider that we have been far greater sinners than some others, yet have passed through the new birth with far less trouble of mind than they? 3. All the dishonours offered to the free grace of God, Christ's invaluable bloodshed; and all the blessed promises in God's Book; in that, on the one hand, when we saw ourselves coming

out of the hands of satan, and from his cursed slavery, we made no more haste out of that wretched, desperate estate; and on the other hand, in that, when we had Jesus Christ, and all the glorious pleasures of his kingdom so seasonably revealed, and freely offered to us, we did not entertain and embrace them with more eagerness and joy, quickness and despatch. 4. Fourthly, Let us take notice how infinitely we have been wanting in thankfulness, for that most glorious work of our conversion; (a greater work than the making of the whole world,) with infinite mercy, with infinite merit, with infinite might. A serious contemplation of the greatness of this benefit is sufficient to overwhelm the largest capacity, human or angelical, with everlasting admiration. Oh! the depth of the goodness of God! If all the hearts and tongues of all the men and angels in heaven and in earth were industriously set on work to extol and magnify this happy change of ours, they would come infinitely short of that which it deserved.

Thus much shall suffice for the discovery of the abominations of the days of our vanity, and our failings in our translation from darkness to light, to suggest unto us further matter for our deeper humiliation. It remains now, to say somewhat of the third and last kind of sins; that is, our relapses, falls, and frailties, since we have been so translated: and this will afford us, (had we time to unfold them,) most ample matter of humiliation, above all the rest. Now, in the review of our relapses, and falls, and frailties, let us consider the multitude, and then the aggravations of them.

First, The multitude of them will appear by these considerations: 1. It will be needful to consider what sins we have been most inclined to since our calling. And we may easily call to mind how our pleasing sin in former times hath broken in upon us in latter times. 2. We may consider what our constitutions have led unto; whether or not some inordinate affection, or distempered passion; if we observe the daily stirrings of these, it will

add greatly to the matter of our humiliation. 3. We are to remember our manifold confessions, and daily prayers and promises made in them; how often we have confessed the same sins to God, and prayed against them; which argues many relapses and backslidings into them. 4. We may recount the wanderings and distractions of our hearts in holy duties; the coldness and deadness of our prayers; unprofitableness under the means of grace, especially our worldly thoughts, idle or earthly talk upon the Lord's day, and divers other ways of uncomfortably mispending, at least some part of it. 5. We may consider how innumerable sins pass by us daily, that we take no notice of. All these meditations will bring tidings of the multitudes of our relapses and infirmities.

Secondly, For the aggravation of them, they are very fearful; 1. Because they are committed against more knowledge than we had in our unregenerate state. 2. Because there is a greater ingratitude in all relapses, in neglecting or abusing the good gifts of God, and turning his grace into wantonness. 3. Because there is in these relapses a breach of covenant with God in a heinous manner, when we have bound our hearts, yea, entered into an oath, to keep the commandments of the Lord, at the receiving of the sacrament, and in divers cases of extremity; now, by our revolting, we break all such bonds asunder. And besides the transgressing of God's covenant, we break our covenant with him, so that he may justly avenge the quarrel of his covenant. 4. Because there is ever in these sins a great grieving of the Spirit of God. Alas! if we grieve our Comforter, where shall we find comfort? 5. Because there is many times a great wrong that by our falls we do unto the blessed name of God, his Word, religion, and the profession of godliness; they make the name of God to be blasphemed. 6. Because such backsliding breeds great hardness of heart, besides the disturbing of our peace. As iron that hath been heated in the fire grows harder when it is taken out, so it is with an heart that hath been once

heated by the grace of God's good Spirit. 7 If we have laid long in our backsliding, our condition is the more grievous. When a man falls into a sin, and immediately rises again, he may more easily recover himself, than if he continue long in his lapsed state. An arm or a leg that is out of joint must quickly be set again; if it be long disjointed, it will cause unspeakable torment to set it, and knit the joints together again.

Out of all that hath been said, I may well draw this conclusion, that in case of relapses, all the duties of repentance, as examination, contrition and confession, are to be practised in a greater measure, and in a more powerful manner. So that, in this case, there must be a more strict examination of our hearts and lives; and that especially for our estate to Godward. Besides, there must be a more severe judging of ourselves, and a greater measure of contrition; as judges use to deal more roughly against malefactors that are twice taken in the same offence. In our confession we must be more particular, and free, and large in aggravating the circumstances of these kinds of sins, and be more earnest in prayer with God, both for the pardoning and healing of these maladies; that our latter end be not worse than our beginning; yea, that we do not expose our poor souls to the unclean spirit, to make a re-entry into them with seven worse than himself.

II Now to help us in the second thing, wherein the spiritual exercise of fasting consisteth; to wit, a sense of God's infinite wrath and most holy indignation against sin: let us consider, 1. The severity of God's judgments and punishment upon sin. For which purpose, look upon the destruction of the angels; the curse that fell upon Adam and all his posterity; the confusions which came upon the first world by the flood; the burning of Sodom with fire and brimstone from heaven; the horrors of a guilty conscience, which is an hell upon earth; the everlasting fire, which is prepared for reprobate men and angels. 2. That no satisfaction would suffice, but the

blood of God's own Son. Had all the blessed angels prostrated themselves at the foot of their Creator, with one strong united cry; yet in the point of expiation of sin, not any, nor all of these, could have done any good at all. Nay, if the Son of God himself, blessed for ever, should have supplicated and solicited (I mean, without suffering,) the Father of all mercies, yet he could not have prevailed; either the Son of God must die, or never could any sin have been pardoned, nor any soul saved.

III. To help us in the third part of this spiritual exercise, to wit, an impartial acknowledgment, and sensible feeling of our own unspeakable misery by reason of sin, let us look back,

1. Upon the time past: with regard to which consider, that all the sins thou hast heretofore committed at any time, in any place, or with any company, are upon record, written as it were, with the point of a diamond, in the book of thy conscience, by the hand of God's justice, and that whensoever hereafter it shall please God, effectually to awaken thy conscience, (if by timely repentance thou prevent not the wrath to come,) they will torment thee with inexplicable horror, and tear thy soul in pieces, when there is none to help.—We see many times one little sin, in the world's esteem, put a guilty conscience into a very hell upon earth. As I have heard of, and known in many, one for a short, sudden imprecation; another for an unworthy thought conceived of God; another for covetously keeping a thing found, and not restoring it, or inquiring after the owner; thinking upon these things in cold blood, God putting particular stings into these several sins, they were so afflicted in conscience, that their very bones were broken; strange tremblings seized upon their bodies; they had no delight in any earthly thing; they have been ready to despair of their salvation, and make away with themselves. If the guilty sense then of one sin, when God sets it on, draw so many fiery points of stinging scorpions after it; what

tearing of heart, gnawing of conscience, and hellish rage, will the whole black and bloody catalogue of all thy sins, mustered up together at once, bring upon thy soul, when the time of God's heavy visitation shall come upon thee, as travail upon a woman with child? When all thy sins together, all thy lies, all thy oaths, all thy railings, all thy passions and filthy thoughts, jovial meetings, and ale-house hauntings, all the wrongs thou hast done, all the time thou hast mispent, thy profanation of every sabbath, thy crucifying of Christ at every sacrament, thy non-proficiency at every sermon, thy ignorance, thy unbelief, thy worldliness, thy covetousness, thy pride, thy malice, thy lust, thy lukewarmness, impatency, discontentedness, vain glory, self-love, the innumerable swarms of idle, wandering, and wicked imaginations; in a word, all the pollutions, distempers, estrangedness from God, in the inward parts; all the vanities and rebellions of thy whole life:—I say, when all these shall be charged upon thy impenitent soul, by the unquenchable indignation of that just God, whose mercy and long-suffering thou hast abused; whose anger thou hast provoked all thy life long; what an hell wilt thou feel in thy conscience? What an unquenchable fire will be kindled there? No mortal heart can comprehend it; no angel's tongue can express a thousandth part of that woful horror.

Consider, 2. How heretofore thou hast had thy hand in drawing many towards hell, and hast been a murderer of other men's souls. For so far as thou hast been a means to make others to sin, so much as in thee lies, hast thou damned them for ever. What a miserable man art thou then, who hast the cry of many souls bleeding to eternal death yelling loud in thine ears? Even of all those whom thou hast any ways inticed to any sin, to drunkenness, to whoredom, or any kind of uncleanness, to sabbath-breaking, to profane sports, to lying, swearing, to idleness, gaming, or wanton dancing; or, in a word, to any service of satan. Nay, it may be, the soul

of thine own wife, (if thou hast one,) that lies in thy bosom, lies bleeding also to eternal death under thy bloody and merciless hand, because thou livest not with her as a man of knowledge. Knowledge, perhaps, thou hast enough to thrive in the world; but no understanding to tell hêr one foot of the right way to heaven. Or, it may be, thine own dear children are already in the path that leads to endless perdition, by thy default; and the bloody knife of thine unconscionable negligence sticks deep in their souls, and stops all hope of cure, because thou dost not catechise them, call them to account upon the sabbath, prepare them for the sacrament; because thou dost not restrain them from ill company, idle sports, and profaning the sabbath. Nay, and perhaps besides, because thou art in thine own family a cursed precedent of sin. To conclude this point, and press this upon thine heart, know assuredly, that all those, in whose damnation thou hast had an hand, (and thou hast done thy part to damn all them to whom thou hast been any cause to sin,) will hereafter, in that hellish dungeon, fly in thy face with horrible and hideous curses, crying, *Woe*, that ever they saw thy face; that ever they had thee to their husband, father, or master; a miserable and wretched man, that wouldst never be warned, before thou hadst damned thy own soul, and undone many more for ever.

Consider, 3. How long thou hast been thus satan's bond-slave, the devil's drudge. Many a grievous sin hast thou committed at his bidding. Thou hast told many a lie, uttered many a rotten word, and filthy jest; perhaps been many times drunk. At his suggestion thou hast harboured many an unclean, proud, covetous, malicious, disdainful, unkind, impatient, angry, and revengeful thought. And assuredly, if thou wilt not leave the devil's colours, under which thou hast marched furiously thus long, and come under the banner of Christ, to which thou hast been called with cries of blood all thy life long,

thou wilt shortly be paid home for all thy cursed service to the powers of hell, with everlasting plagues.

2. Look upon thy present estate, and therein consider, 1. Thy hurtfulness, whilst thou continuest a natural man. There is nothing in the world but thou hurtest or vexest one way or other. Thou fearfully dishonourest God the Father, by a stubborn disobedience to his Word. Thou tramplest under foot the precious blood of Christ, by thy wilfully going on in sin. Thou grievest God's blessed Spirit, by smothering those holy motions which he stirs up in thy heart. Thou displeasest, so much as in thee lies, the blessed angels, and bereavest them of that joy which they would conceive at thy conversion. Thou pollutest all the creatures thou meddlest with, because they are not sanctified unto thee by the Word of God and prayer. And perhaps, as thou enjoyest them by usurpation, so sometimes thou exercisest merciless tyranny over them. "A righteous man," saith Solomon, "regardeth the life of his beast, but the mercies of the wicked are cruel," Prov. xii. 10. As for thy brethren in iniquity, thou fearfully hardenest them, and encouragest them in the way to hell; others thou empoisonest with thy example, and infectious company. Neither in doing mischief, dost thou spare thy own family. Thou drawest after thee thy sons and servants with the cords of vanity, and cart-ropes of iniquity, as fast and forcibly as thou canst, into the same damnation of hell. In the mean time, every hour thou so continuest, thou treasurest up to thyself wrath against the day of wrath; and when the measure and the number of thy sins are full, perhaps in the brightest sunshine of thy worldly happiness, "the Lord will suddenly rain upon thee snares, fire, and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: and will laugh at thy destruction, and mock when thy fear comes."

Consider, 2. That if thou now be cut off by the stroke of death, thou art certainly miserable for ever. And how many ways mayst thou die any day? Besides the many diseases that, insensibly breeding in thy body, may kill

thee suddenly, thy house is subject to fire, robbery, tempestuous winds, thunders, and other wasting calamities. If thou put from shore in a ship, or boat, there is but a foot's breadth between thee and death. If thou get on horseback, one stumble may take away thy life. What protection hast thou? What assurance, be thou never so strong or young, to see the sun rise the next morning; since many have gone well to bed, and before morning it has become their grave? If then there be so many ways to take thee out of this life, and thou mayest be cut off so suddenly, and if thou die as thou art, art certainly damned, what a miserable man art thou!

3. Look forward upon the time to come. And herein consider, 1. Death, through which thou must shortly pass. 2. The dreadful tribunal of the ever-living God, before which thou must shortly appear. 3. That fiery lake, wherein thou must live for ever, unless thou sincerely and heartily repent thee of thy wicked life, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

IV To help in the fourth part of spiritual exercise in fasting, to wit, to get into thy heart a contempt of thyself, most worthy to be abhorred in dust and ashes; do thou, that art yet in thy natural state, consider, 1. Hadst thou seen that man in Luke viii. out of whom Christ Jesus cast so many devils, that for their number, their name was called *Legion*, ver. 30. If thou hadst looked upon him all naked, as he was, haunting the graves, tearing in pieces his chains, wherewith he was bound, and hurried often by the devil into the wilderness, thou wouldst have accounted him a spectacle of extreme misery. Now thou thyself, in thy natural state, art a thousand times more miserable; nay, hadst thou in thy body, for his legion, a million of devils, yet shouldst thou be less miserable than thy many unpardoned and unrepented sins do make thee. My reasons are these: 1. Every sin is fouler than the foulest fiend in hell; as you have seen before. 2. The devils may possess and have power over the bodies of the saints, when God gives

them leave. They had over Christ's, Matt. iv. 5. But such sins as thine, unpardoned and unrepented of, cannot possibly be found in any sanctified man. 3. Were all the devils in hell in thy body, yet if thou heartily hatedst all sin, and didst cleave to Christ, and his truth, they could not all do thee a pin's worth of hurt about the salvation of thy soul : but one known sin, loved and delighted in, will destroy thy soul for ever. 2. Consider what a wretch art thou, that one way or other wrongest all the world, God and man ; and makest every creature in heaven and earth the worse for thee, Jer. ii. 12, iv. 28, xiii. 10, Psalm cvii. 34, Gen. xix. 25, Exod. xvii. 7. Yet by the way let me tell thee, upon repentance, all this inexplicable misery shall be turned into inconceivable felicity.

V To help in the fifth part of this spiritual exercise, to wit, to make thy heart to break and bleed within thee for the sins of thy soul ; before I propound the helps, consider, that the end of our examination is this afflicting of our souls, (as the Scripture calls it,) or the humbling and casting down of our souls before the Lord. The prophet Joel calls it, the rending of our hearts. For therefore do we abstain for a time from meat, that we may have a quick sense and feeling of our own unworthiness. Therefore we bring down the body, that the mind might also be brought down, and our hearts broken and rent in sunder. Now this humiliation for sin must be especially for the vileness of our sins, rather than for the punishments that are either felt or feared. Though the people of God ought to be humbled for God's judgments, yet that is neither the only, nor the chief cause of their humiliation ; but their sins do most of all affect them. As it was with David, Psalm xxxviii. 18, " I will declare mine iniquity, and be sorry for my sin." This we had need look very carefully unto, because otherwise all our labour will be lost ; and the Lord will account no better of that other worldly sorrow, than he doth of the roaring of a wild bull in a net ; whereas the sorrow for

the evil of sin, as it is the joy of angels, so it is the delight of our heavenly Father. This is for the duty and manner of it. Now to help thee in it, consider,

1. How that heart of thine hath been the forge wherein all thy sins were first hammered out; all thy filthy thoughts, raging passions, wicked purposes, and rebellious actions have sprung from that den of darkness, and dungeon of iniquity. That bottomless sink hath sent out continually empoisoned streams of abominable thoughts, words, and deeds, all thy life long. Then great reason hast thou to make that heart, for the time to come, a fountain of godly sorrow, of penitent tears, of mourning, lamenting, and bewailing thy sins all the days of thy life. If Christ Jesus vouchsafe to open upon thy soul a fountain of his own blood for sins and for uncleanness, thou art a guilty wretch and cruel enemy to thy soul's comfort, if thou dost not endeavour to keep open in thine heart a counter-well, as it were, of weeping over him whom thou hast pierced, and for those sins which have put the Son of God to death.

2. Consider, that the heart of the dear, innocent, only Son of God, for thy sake was pierced through, and filled with that singularity of spiritual heaviness, anguish of spirit, and affliction, that I am persuaded, were all the several sorrows of all the sons and daughters of Adam, from the creation to the world's end, collected and inflicted upon one heart, they would come short. The fierceness of his Father's wrath did press him so sore, and lie so heavy upon him, that it wrung out of his blessed body even drops of blood, and from his heart that rueful cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Now, shall the precious heart of God's own Son, (infinitely free from sin,) fall asunder in his breast, like drops of water for thy sins, and shall not thy sinful heart groan and sigh at all? Shall it not mourn and melt for the infinite abominations of thine own heart and life? Oh horrible hardness! Prodigious ingratitude!

3. Be assured, that if that heart of thine be not wounded in this day of thy visitation, while it is called to-day, it will and must hereafter be filled with that horror, which would burst a thousand to think upon it; and abide the whole and unquenchable wrath of God, flaming upon it with extreme anguish, world without end. Must the Son of God himself lie bleeding upon the cross; and thinkest thou to go to heaven upon a bed of down, and be saved without trouble of conscience for sin? Assure thyself it will never be. It is infinitely more impossible than for thee to reach the heaven with thine hand. Either therefore let thy heart break under the hammer of the Word, while it is to-day, and make it the subject of godly sorrow; or, as sure as thy heart is in thy body, it will hereafter become the object upon which the fierce wrath of God, and fiercest torments in hell, shall be exercised with extremity and everlastingness. But if thou get a truly broken heart into thy bosom, thou presently gettest right to and interest in all the purchases of Christ's passion.

VI. To help in the sixth spiritual duty of fasting, to wit, to quicken and stir up thy heart to a particular and impartial confession of sins, and to sincere acknowledgments of, and expressions of inward grief for, the same; consider,

1. The practice of the saints.
2. In case of outward troubles, people are wont to wring their hands, beat their breasts, sometimes to tear their hair, and weep immeasurably: now assuredly, if the concurrence of all Job's outward miseries upon one man would require one watery tear; the least sin of thy soul might justly challenge at thine hand a whole torrent of bloody tears. If thou wouldst spend one sigh for the death of thy son, the groaning out of the last drop of thy dearest blood were far too little for the death of thy soul. If thou wouldst wring thine hands for the loss of thine husband, well mightest thou wail all the days of thy life, for the loss of communion with Christ Jesus. If thou wouldst beat thy breast for the burning of thine house, justly

mightest thou break thine heart in pieces for the sinful consumption of thy soul. For doubtless, *Grace ought to raise our affections as high about heavenly things, as nature about earthly.* 3. Weigh well this Scripture, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but he that confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy," Prov. xxviii. 13.

VII. To help in the seventh spiritual exercise, to wit, to get a hatred of sin, consider, 1. The foulness, 2. Infectiousness, 3. Perniciousness of sin. It is the only object of God's extremest hatred. It is fouler than the foulest fiend in hell. It is of that pestilential infectious property, that it pollutes every thing it comes near. It is full of fearful and pernicious effects; of which I spoke largely before. All which, well weighed, might be sufficient to provoke an utter hatred of it.

Thus far you have heard of those several duties required in the spiritual exercise of fasting, all which concern our humiliation; with the means and motives thereunto. But farther, in a true spiritual fast, there must be fasting from sin, or the forsaking of all our sins. For whilst we abstain from lawful things, we are admonished much more to abstain from all things that are unlawful, at all times. If we abstain from meats and drinks, which at other times we may use, we ought especially to renounce all our sins, which should never be used. He that fasts from meat, and abstains not from sin, is like the devil and the spirits of darkness, which neither eat nor drink, and yet do nothing else but dishonour God; and so the fast of drunkards, whoremongers, and whosoever lives in any known sin, is no better than a devilish fast. Therefore ye shall ever find it the practice of the faithful, that at their fasts, immediately they forsook those sins for which they mourned. Likewise the Word and prayer must be added. We find the Word preached and read at such times, Neh. ix. 3; they read in the book of the law one fourth part of the day, and together with their reading, they expounded the Word, Neh. viii. 8.

So we always find in holy Scripture, that fasting is joined with prayer, as in the fore-named places. Now, forasmuch as prayer is a daily and ordinary exercise of God's children, it is manifest, that by prayer, which is coupled with fasting, is understood a special kind of prayer, wherein two things are requisite; 1. Fervency of desire. This, indeed, is required always in our prayers, but especially upon such days of humiliation. For then we must not only pray, but cry unto the Lord, Joel i. 14, whereby vehement prayer is signified; yea, as the Ninevites speak, Jonah iii. 2, "We are to cry mightily unto him." For the use of outward abstinence is but the wing of prayer, wherewith it might more easily fly up to heaven. And, 2. In such a prayer, there should be an assurance of faith that we shall obtain our request; the Lord having made a gracious promise in many places to this ordinance, Joel ii. 18, 19, 2 Chron. vii. 14, Isaiah lviii. 8, 13. And let all the fasts of the churches of God and godly men recounted in Scripture, both in the Old and New Testament, be looked into, and it shall be seen that the end of their fast was a feast; and the issue of their mourning great rejoicing. And, moreover, works of mercy must be added in this case. "Is not this the fast that I have chosen, to loose the bands of wickedness, to deal thy bread unto the hungry, to bring the poor that are cast out into thy house, and when thou seest the naked to cover them?" Isaiah lviii. 6, 7 In a word then, both in our publick and private fasts, this must always be observed, that the poor may have the gain of our fasting, and not our own purses: if their loins and bowels shall bless us, as Isaiah speaks, "The Lord will also bless us abundantly."

Yet farther, we must ever, in these days of humiliation, after we have humbled our souls before the Lord, renew our covenant with him; and not only unfeignedly purpose, but faithfully promise amendment, in performing the duties we heretofore have omitted, and eschewing

those sins we heretofore used to commit : we must make a sure covenant with our God, to part with all sin, and to cleave to him for ever. And when we have entered into, or renewed this covenant, we must take heed of breaking it. To this purpose, it may be necessary for the better settling of our resolution, to bind ourselves by a solemn vow, as the Jews did, Neh. ix. 38, “They made a sure covenant, and put their seals to it;” and the substance and manner of their covenant is set down, Neh. x. 29. They entered into an oath to walk in God’s law, and to observe and do all his commandments. The necessity of this unfeigned purpose required in this exercise is evident, because without it we remain in our impenitency, and being impenitent sinners, the Lord will not hear us. Besides, our hearts are exceeding fickle, and all good motions and purposes presently die in them : therefore they had need be bound to their good behaviour by solemn vows and resolutions.

Lastly, When all this is done, we must take heed above all things of inward pride, and resting in the performance. It was the case of the proud Pharisee, and it is also of the Papists at this day, who will needs merit heaven by such exercises as these. If the devil can but prevail to make thee self-conceited with thine enlargements, and to trust to that service thou hast done, he will deprive thee of all the benefits and blessings of thy humiliation. Labour, therefore, as much as possible thou canst, to humble thyself with a thorough view of thy failings in the best of thy performances ; and the consideration of the fountain of all thy enlargements, which is not any ability of thine own, but the good Spirit of God, breathing where and when it listeth, and letting out thy strait heart, which otherwise would be utterly shut up. Therefore let him have the glory of all thy abilities and enlargements, who hath given thee his grace, and hath said, that he will not give his glory to another.

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EXTRACTS  
FROM  
THE WORKS  
OF

JOHN PRESTON, D.D.

CHAPLAIN IN ORDINARY TO HIS MAJESTY KING CHARLES I.

*Master of Emmanuel College in Cambridge, and some time Preacher  
of Lincoln's Inn.*

—◆—  
TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

SOME ACCOUNT OF HIS LIFE,

BY THE REV. MR. BALL,

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VOL. V

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THE LIFE  
OF  
DR. JOHN PRESTON.

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JOHN PRESTON, the son of Thomas and Alice Preston, was born at Heyford, in Northamptonshire. He was baptized October 27, 1587, but was descended from the family of the Prestons, of Preston in Lancashire.

His mother's maiden name was Marsh, but she had an uncle, whose name was Creswel, a man of means and good esteem in Northampton, where he had been several times mayor. This uncle, being rich, and having no child, was very careful of her, and took this son, whilst he was young, unto himself, and sent him to the free-school in Northampton; and when he had been there some time, his uncle was persuaded to remove him into Bedfordshire, unto one Mr. Guest, who was accounted a better teacher of the Greek tongue; from whence, after he had perfected his studies in the Greek, he was sent to Cambridge, and admitted of King's-College, in 1604.

Two years after, he was persuaded to remove to Queen's-College, where he was under the tuition of Mr. Oliver Bowles, one of the fellows of that house, a very learned man, and a careful tutor, by whose directions he grew in knowledge, and improved greatly in his studies. He already looked high, and grew acquainted with those that

had desires to be secretaries, or agents in princes courts. He thought it below him to be a minister, and accordingly got in with a merchant, by whose means he procured that he should live in Paris, and learn the language and garb of France ; and another gentleman, in recompence, should be received and entertained in London, to learn our garb and language. Mr. Creswel, of Northampton, was by this time dead, and had bequeathed certain lands in that town to him. These lands he sold, and put himself into a posture fit for that design ; but here he began to find that he should have said, "If the Lord will, I shall live and do this or that," Jam. iv. 15, for the merchant died before the exchange could be accomplished ; and so these blooming hopes died with him.

He was of an able, firm constitution, of a brown, comely visage, with a vigorous and vivid eye, but somewhat inclining to melancholy, which now began to be a little discovered in him. For being disappointed in his design, he grew discouraged, and retired. His genius now led him to natural philosophy, wherein he resolved to leave no secret unattempted. Aristotle was his tutelary saint. No dark untrodden path in all his physics or metaphysics but he was perfect in it ; and so drowned and devoted was he, that he seldom or never could be seen abroad, to the wonder of his former companions ; so that no time passed idle ; not that between the ringing and tolling of the bell to meals ; and for his sleep, he made it short. And whereas notwithstanding all endeavours, there was one in the college that would always be up before him, he would let the bed-clothes hang down, that in the night they might fall off, and so the cold awaken him ; insomuch that his tutor was constrained to tell him, "As there might be intemperance in meats and drinks, so also there might be in studies." But the evil of it, as yet, he felt not, the sweet and good he did ; came off with honour and applause in all his acts ; and was admired in the regent-house, when he sat for his degree, both by the Posers and all the masters that ex-

examin'd him ; and from that time much observed throughout the university.

About this time his tutor was called to the rectory of Sutton in Bedfordshire ; and Dr. Potter, another of the fellows, became his tutor, a very learned man, and great philosopher, who never went to dissuade him from his studies, but gave him all assistance and encouragement. Soon after, he was chosen fellow, by the unanimous consent of the master and fellows ; and his tutor, Dr. Potter, brought him word of it as he was at study, not thinking any thing, and told him, that he must come down into the chapel presently to be admitted ; accordingly he was admitted fellow of Queen's-College, in the year 1609, five years after his first admission into the university.

He was by this time grown a master in philosophy, and had met with few that were able to encounter him ; and therefore now resolved to go another while to school to Hippocrates and Galen. He had a very penetrating wit, and exact solid judgment, to conjecture at effects in causes ; and being skilful in philosophy before, soon made the theory his own. But because the life and vigour of a science is in the practice, he resolved to make inquiry after that. So he retired unto a friend of his in Kent, who was very famous for his practice, where he earnestly studied the art of knowing simples, and compounding medicines. And ever after, when any of his pupils were ill, though he sent them unto physicians, yet himself perused, and many times corrected their prescriptions.

It was not easy to allay his eager and unsatisfied appetite and apprehension with any one art ; hence he thought he could not be a good physician, that could not read the powers of the herbs and plants in stars and planets, and therefore acquainted himself with Ptolemy, and other authors in astrology, and other curious arts and calculations, as they are called, Acts xix. 19, that he might be able to study, not only books, but men, and to read men's fortunes in the heavenly bodies ; but he could not

read his own. For as he was in these celestial contemplations, it fell out that Mr. Cotton, then fellow of Emmanuel-College, preached in St. Mary's, where Mr. Preston hearing him, was set about another exercise, constrained from his contemplations in astrology, to look into himself. This sermon bereaved him of two beloved notions; one was his low opinion of the ministry and preaching; for he saw an over-ruling gravity and majesty in that sermon, that he thought had not been in pulpits. Another was, his great opinion of state-employments; for these were higher things that now were offered to him; concerns of eternal influence, which nothing could divert him from.

Mr. Preston after this wanted ease; and when he could not find it in his other books, began a little to look into the Bible. In the prosecution of his study in philosophy, he found many of the schoolmen quoted, and so was willing to look a little into them; and finding those he lit on pithy and sententious, went on. It gave him ease that he was now a student in divinity, and had left Albumasar and Guido, and such high-flown speculations; yet it pleased him to find his master Aristotle so often quoted, and in such request among them; and he thought if that were to be a preacher, he might adventure well enough upon it, and so was drawn on very far in the study of the school-divines. I have heard him say, There was nothing that ever Scotus or Occham wrote but he had weighed and examined. He continued longer in Aquinas, whose sums he would sometimes read as the barber cut his hair, and when it fell on the place he read, he would not lay down his book, but blow it off; and in this tune he continued until a rumour came into the university that the king would shortly come to visit them.

Dr. Harsnet, Master of Pembroke-Hall, was then vice-chancellor, a prudent, well-advised governor, who knowing well the critical and able apprehension of the king, was very careful and solicitous to pitch upon the ablest in every faculty for actors in that solemn entertainment;

and himself made choice of Mr. Preston to answer the philosophy act. The king commended all the actors ; but above all, Mr. Preston. Many of the great ones did the same ; and Sir Fulk Grevill, afterward Lord Brook, after many demonstrations of his real love, settled at last a stipend on him of fifty pounds a year, and was his friend unto his last hour.

His reputation now continually increased, so that he was accounted the only tutor ; and being careful to read unto his pupils, and direct their studies, he found himself abridged of his own time, and was constrained to take up the time that should have been bestowed on his body. He grew acquainted now with many eminent ministers, as Mr. Dod, and Mr. Hildersham, who would come often to his chamber, and he would get them many times to go to prayer with his pupils, a boldness not adventured on by any other. But by these labours his able body was debilitated. It was a great orator that said, "At first I would not plead, at last I could not." Mr. Preston in his youth would not sleep, now he could not ; but about midnight still awoke, and slept no more ; whereby in time his body languished, and could not answer as in former times.

It was not long before it came to Mr. Preston's course to be dean and catechist, which he resolved to improve by going through a body of divinity, that he might be a guide unto the scholars in their studies in divinity. This being known, and some honest townsmen hearing him at first by chance, there came the next day very many to hear him, and the next day more, both townsmen and scholars from other colleges, so that the outward chapel would be often full before the fellows came. Complaint was made to the vice-chancellor of this unusual kind of catechising. It was assured, that not only the townsmen and scholars mingled, but other colleges intruded also, that the fellows, for the crowd, could not get through and come to their places in the chapel ; that it was not safe for any man to be thus doted on, unless they had a

mind to cry up Puritanism, which would in a short time pull them down.

An order was agreed on in the consistory, and sent unto the college, that the scholars and townsmen should be confined to their proper preachers; that no stranger, neither townsman nor scholar, should presume to come unto these lectures, that were proper only for the members of the college. The edict was observed punctually, and the auditory by it much impaired. Had strangers still been suffered to attend, those sermons had been printed; for there were divers that exactly noted, and wrote out all fair, unto the time of this restraint; but no one after that could go on with it, and so it rests. But he went on, and was assiduous to the year's end, which was a great help unto many of his pupils, who made the greater use of those things because they were not in print.

About that time the lecture at Trinity-Church and the sermons at St. Andrew's were prohibited, and the scholars all confined to St. Mary's; which occasioned Mr. Preston to read divinity to his pupils on the Lord's-days, at three o'clock in the afternoon, which he also often did upon the week-days; but the townsmen and the scholars of other colleges, that had tasted of his spirit in the chapel, prayed that he would do it where they might hear. Botolph's belongs unto Queen's-College, and is usually supplied by one of that house; there he was willing to make a trial, and resolved the next Lord's-Day to preach at three o'clock, after St. Mary's sermon should be ended; which, though but very little known, occasioned such a throng and crowd as was incredible.

There dwelt then in the parish one Dr. Newcomb, a civilian, and commissary to the chancellor of Ely, who being in the church, and seeing the crowd, commanded that evening-prayer should be read, and no sermon preached. The minister entreated that for that time Mr. Preston might preach; so did the Earl of Lincoln and others in the church; but he was resolute: and

because he would not be further importuned, went away with all his family, and left them to determine at their peril what they would do. So, upon advice, it was concluded that the sermon should go on ; and Mr. Preston preached upon 2 Pet. iii. 17, 18. There was so much time spent in debates about it, before the commissary left the congregation, that it was too late to do both, and therefore they adventured, for that time, to forbear common-prayer, that so the scholars might depart, and be at college-prayers. But this instructed Dr. Newcomb in his complaint. The court was then near at hand, that is, at Newmarket. Thither the commissary went the next day, and having the Bishop of Ely there, and many other clergymen, assured them that Mr. Preston was in heart, and would quickly be in practice, a Nonconformist, and was so followed in the university, that unless some speedy course were taken with him, they might see their power trodden under foot ; and told them, gentleness was not the way, for he was cunning, and would recover all, if he were not thoroughly dealt with.

There was no advocate for Mr. Preston ; but the Doctor, being first in his own cause, seemed just. The Puritans began to be considerable, and they doubted he might come in time to head them. It is a great security to a man to be despised. But David, that hath a party following him, must have an army to attend him. The king was acquainted with this complaint, and assured, that Mr. Preston had as strong an influence on the Puritans, as the principal of the Jesuits had upon them, and therefore it behoved him to consider what to do. A word was enough to a jealous king, who immediately inquired, whether the bishop's and chancellor's jurisdiction extended unto members of a college, and finally concluded to proceed against him by the power of the university.

A letter was then framed to Dr. Scot, Master of Clare-Hall, Vice-Chancellor at that time, and to the Heads, to call Mr. Preston before them, to give a strict account of

that disobedience to the commissary. He answered mildly, that he was not guilty; referred himself unto the auditory, that evening prayer was omitted, in order that the scholars might depart in due time; (seeing the time allotted for it was spent in treating with the commissary,) not out of any disrespect unto the service, which he himself did usually attend at other times. They told him, they were engaged to support, by all just means, the bishop's jurisdiction: that the king had honoured him, in leaving that affront to be examined by his proper judges, and that except he could take off the court, they must proceed to a severe censure.

Mr. Preston was not altogether a stranger at the court. When he came to Newmarket, he found that Bishop Andrews, then bishop of Ely, was chief, and that his jurisdiction in the commissary, was it that was pretended to be affronted; therefore he applied himself to him, and told him, that he did not purpose to offend, but being engaged to preach at that time, could not with honour disappoint the auditory; if he suspected him for any thing, he desired he would examine him, and satisfy himself. The bishop told him, the king was told he was an enemy to forms of prayer, and held no prayer lawful but extemporary: and therefore being popular, his judgment and opinion might do hurt. Mr. Preston answered, that it was a slander, for he thought set forms lawful, and refused not to be present on all occasions at the College prayers, and when it was his turn, to read them. The bishop answered, that he was glad, and would inform the king, and do him all the good he could, and bade him wait a while, and then repair again to him; and so time passed on, and there was nothing done. But Dr. Young, dean of Winchester, told Mr. Preston plainly, that Bishop Andrews was his greatest adversary, and though he gave him good words, yet assured the king, that if Mr. Preston was not expelled the university, lord bishops would not long continue. Only because Mr. Preston was accounted

a learned man, he was not willing to appear against him ; but desired the punishment might be inflicted where the fact was done, and that was in the university.

Mr. Preston saw now, that the bishop was a courtier, and could give words, where deeds were not intended, and therefore went again unto the bishop, and told him plainly, that he or none must put a period to his attendance ; and that either he should speak unto the king in his behalf, or tell him plainly, that he would not. The bishop paused a while, and at last bade him come such a time again, and he would deal with the king in his behalf. So he went to the king, and told him that however Mr. Preston was very dangerous, yet he doubted it would not be well to expel him ; for he would be absolved in the opinions of men, and applauded as their martyr. And therefore he thought it would be better to enjoin him to declare his judgment about forms of prayer ; for that would be accounted a recantation, and would weaken his reputation with the Puritans. Accordingly an order was sent to the Vice-Chancellor, that Mr. Preston should in Botolph's church declare his judgment, concerning forms of prayer, upon a certain Sunday.

Before he could come home, the news was all about the town, that Mr. Preston was to preach a recantation sermon at Botolph's church on such a day. On that day there was a very great assembly, though he did all he could to have concealed it. So he went on upon his former text, and preached a very profitable sermon, concerning growing in grace, and directed prayer, as a special means to make men grow in grace. Now that (he said) was of two sorts, either that which was extemporary, or set and prescribed before. And whereas some thought this was to stint the Spirit, he said, there was a liberty to use conceived prayer at other times, wherein the Spirit might enlarge itself. They that came to laugh, had no great cause to do it, for this passage was at the very close ; and the sermon all along before, was sharp and searching ; both sides were silent and went home, not without some

prints of good upon their spirits. Indifferent hearers praised all, and were confirmed in a good opinion of the preacher. Good men were glad he came off so well, and was at liberty to preach again.

King James had always something in his writings and speeches against the Puritans, which was ill taken, for that it was apparent, those meant thereby were conscientious persons. The House of Commons was the only mote in King James's eye, the *remora*, (as he conceived) unto his absolute dominion ; for he knew not how to engage them, as he did the lawyers and divines ; but if he stopped one mouth with preferment this parliament, there would be others open the next. There were some now that adventured to apologize for Puritans, and to say in parliament, that honest men were wounded under that name ; and to propose, that godly ministers might not be silenced, and thrown out of their freeholds for trifles and ceremonies. But King James would not bear this ; but broke up the parliament, and set out proclamations against them.

The chaplains that attended monthly at the court, were not ambitious of preaching over often ; and so a combination was agreed on for preachers before the king, whenever he should lie within twelve miles of Cambridge. By this means it came to Mr. Preston's turn to preach before the king at Royston. He could not decline it ; for that would have exposed him unto too much observation ; and yet he feared what might befall him in the doing of it.

When he was to preach, it fell out that his course came upon a Tuesday. The court was very thin, and the prince and Duke of Buckingham were both abroad, and the king himself was for a hunting-match that day, and gave order that the sermon should begin at eight o'clock. Mr. Preston had some at the court, that were solicitous as well as he, and they told him it would give very great content, if he would take occasion in the sermon, to shew his judgment, as he had done before, about set forms. Dr. Young, Dean of Winchester, (of whom we spake

before) did then attend, and when the king came in, he told him who it was that was to preach, and said, he hoped he would give content: "I pray God he may," said the king. The text was John i. 16, which he so clearly opened and applied, that the king sat all the while as quiet as could be, and never stirred nor spake to any body, but by his looks discovered he was pleased. When Mr. Preston had done, he came to the king, as was usual, to kiss his hand; and the king asked him of what Preston he was descended, he answered of that in Lancashire. Then said the king, "You have many of your name and kindred very eminent; and Preston the priest, although a papist, is a very learned man.

Great haste was made to bring in dinner, and the king was very pleasant all the time; had his eye continually upon Mr. Preston, and spake of divers passages in the sermon with much content. As soon as ever he was retired, the Marquis of Hamilton kneeled down, and besought him, that he might commend the preacher to him for his chaplain, protested he did not so much as know him, but that he was moved by the weight and strength of what he had delivered: told him, he spoke no pen and ink-horn language, but as one that comprehended what he said, and that he could not but have substance and matter in him. The king acknowledged all, but said it was too early.

There were few clergymen at court, and so no opposition; yet the king himself hung back. He was not reconcilable to the Puritans, and so desired not in that respect to engage him; but he desired to deprive them of Mr. Preston, and to divide him from them. With this view he was graciously received, and admitted chaplain in ordinary to the prince.

About this time, Dr. Dunn, preacher at Lincoln's Inn, died, and some in that society proposed Mr. Preston for the place. It suited with him, to have an opportunity to exercise his ministry in a considerable and intelligent congregation, where he was assured, many parliament-

men, and others of his best acquaintance, would be his hearers ; so he consented, and undertook the place. The chapel then was very little, and at first, the numbers that attended on his ministry, besides their own society, were few ; but when the chapel was new-built, the numbers were exceeding great that were his constant hearers, and such foundations were laid, as will not easily be ruined.

This was some ease unto his mind, that was grieved for Dr. Davenant's leaving the college and university ; but filled not his great capacity and large desire of doing good. The college he gave over in his thoughts, but not the university, where his preaching made great impressions. And though at Lincoln's Inn he had gownsmen to hear his doctrine ; yet they were not likely to propagate and spread it. A preacher in the university begets begetters, and transmits unto posterity what God is pleased to reveal to him. And he of all men, thirsted after opportunities of doing service, and might well say with the spouse, that " he was sick of love," Cant. ii. 5.

Some of the Fellows of Emmanuel College were very eminent for parts and learning, yet clouded by an opinion that lay upon the college, that they were Puritans ; that is, not only godly and religious, (for so they were, and were content to be esteemed) but Nonconformists, and averse to government ; they thought, therefore, if they could prevail with Dr. Chaderton, their present master, to resign, they might perhaps procure that Mr. Preston might succeed him, and bring the college into reputation, being a good man, and yet a courtier, the prince's chaplain, and very gracious with the Duke of Buckingham. But the old Doctor was exceeding wary and backward herein, till he received the following letter from the Duke of Buckingham.

" SIR,

" I HAVE moved his Majesty concerning Mr. Preston's succeeding of you in the mastership of Emmanuel College, who is not only willing, but also graciously pleased to

recommend him to the place in especial manner before any other ; so that in making this way for him, you shall do a very acceptable thing to his Majesty, as also to the prince his master, of which I am likewise to give you notice : and to put you out of all doubt, that another may be thrust upon you ; you shall not need to fear any thing, in regard that from his Majesty there will be no hindrance to his succession ; and for that point of supply of maintenance, I shall (as I promised) take care for to procure it, when fit occasion shall be offered : so taking kindly what you have done, I rest,

“ Your very loving friend,

“ G. BUCKINGHAM.

“ *Theobalds, Sept. 20, 1622.*”

Though the statute ordain a vacancy of seven days, and notice by a schedule pasted upon the chapel-door, yet such was the uniform agreement of all the fellows, that it was not discovered to any of the scholars until the day of election. And because there is a sacrament to be immediately before it, they were constrained to lock up all the gates, that none might come in or go out, till it was past ; and then two of the fellows were despatched to Queen's College, to acquaint Dr. Preston with what they had done ; and to desire, that at two o'clock he would repair unto the college to be admitted, and undertake the charge.

This was strange news at Queen's. And there was an order given presently, that all the scholars should be ready against two o'clock that day, to attend Mr. Preston, and the Fellows, to Emmanuel College, in habits suitable unto their several qualities, which was done accordingly ; and a very great company attended him, from Queen's to Emmanuel, where they were cheerfully received, and entertained according to the custom ; and then returned to Queen's, but left Mr. Preston, the prop and glory of it, at Emmanuel's.

This news ran swiftly all the kingdom over, and was received as men were affected. Good men were glad that honest men were not abhorred as they had been at the court. The courtiers made full account that he was theirs, and would mount up from one step to another, until he was a prelate; especially the Duke of Buckingham, who, from this time, seemed sincerely to affect him. The Earl of Pembroke, and the Countess of Bedford, had a great interest in him, and he in them; and all men looked on him as upon a rising man, and respected him accordingly. As for the members of Lincoln's-Inn, they reckoned that by their means especially he rose to this honour, as having first expressed their good opinion of him, and took occasion to express it, according to their several dispositions and relations, when he came to them in the term, which shortly followed.

About this time, Sir Arthur Chichester was chosen to go ambassador into Germany about the Palatinate affairs, and Mr. Preston was, by the Duke of Buckingham, and other friends, designed to go along with him. He did not greatly fancy the employment, but would not contradict; only it was considered, that though he was the prince's chaplain, and master of a college, yet he was not doctor, which they thought might sound ill abroad; therefore a mandate was addressed to the vice-chancellor and heads, that forasmuch as Mr. Preston was to wait upon my lord ambassador, and could not in so short time perform his acts, he should be forthwith admitted doctor in divinity, that he might be ready to attend the service; which was done accordingly with all alacrity. But the voyage came to nothing; for Sir Arthur did not go, as he intended.

It was ever his ambition not to be mercenary in the ministry, but to preach where he might do most good, without respect to the wages; and he considered, that the master of Emmanuel could have no living that had cure of souls annexed, and therefore was willing to give

ear unto the solicitations of the townsmen, who greatly pressed him to be their lecturer at Trinity-church. After much opposition, he was confirmed lecturer there, where he preached all his time after, and did much good.

Death knocks alike at palaces, as at the meanest cottages; for, on March 27, 1625, the Lord's-day, about ten o'clock in the morning, King James died at Theobald's. He was much beloved of his servants, as well as of his children, and was greatly lamented of both. Indeed it was a very mournful morning. Dr. Preston then attended in his month, and was sometimes hastened to the prince to comfort him; and sometimes to the duke; for they were both of them retired, and wept bitterly. But Sir Edward Conway, and some of the lords, proclaimed Charles Stuart king; and haste was made to London. The prince and duke, and Dr. Preston, in coaches shut down, hastened to Whitehall, and there he was proclaimed again, with much solemnity, and great rejoicing of the people.

Not long after, the duke resolved to drop Dr. Preston. The doctor was too knowing not to see this afar off; and had accordingly provided a succession of reserves, wherein to hide himself. The first and surest was his conscience, 2 Cor. i. 12, "This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." An undeniable argument whereof was, that he never sued for the least preferment; but studied, and often consulted how, without breaking, he might avoid them.

And though he lived like himself, and gave relief to others, yet it was ever of his own. And indeed he was a man of very much communion and sweet society with God; prayed much in private, and by himself, besides as tutor with his pupils, and after as master of his family. Whatever weakness he was in, or business did occur, he

kept many private days of fasting by himself, especially before the sacraments and sabbath-days; and accordingly enjoyed a constant clearness and assurance of his justification, and interest in the blood of Christ; even then, when frailties and infirmities did most of all afflict him. He never, that I know, was troubled or perplexed about adoption, though very often about the imperfection of his graces; so that he studied most exactly the treatise of the Saints' Infirmities; and there is nothing in all his works that may more properly be called his.

His next retreat was to Lincoln's-Inn. For there was a resolution in some of the fellows to petition the duke, who was now chancellor of the university, to annul the statute of continuance or commoration in the college; yet he conceived the lawyers would pretend a kind of freedom and exemption. For he saw, when Dr. Sibbs was outed, both of fellowship and lecture in the university, yet he was received and retained at Gray's-Inn unto his death; therefore he would in no sort leave his title unto, and interest in Lincoln's-Inn, but reserved it in his power unto his dying day.

But he knew kings had long hands, and that the duke's were nothing shorter; therefore he pondered of removing farther off, if need were. And, having weighed all retreats, resolved upon Basil, in the Switzer's country; and determined, in case he could not be free in England, to settle there, and spend the residue of his days in writing what he was not suffered to preach, or had not published according to his mind.

He was naturally very affable and courteous unto strangers of any country, and by conversing much with them, endeavoured to preserve his knowledge in the French and Italian languages. After he had thus resolved upon Basil, he was very friendly to all the Germans that were dispersed from several universities, especially from the Palatinate; for whom he procured several sorts of entertainments, both in the country

abroad, and in the university; for which, as he had very many gratulatory epistles from particular persons, so one from the king of Bohemia, under his hand and seal.

But he knew that these were but the foxes' earths, that might successively be taken and possessed. He therefore trusted only in the name of the Lord, that is, the goodness, mercy, and power of the mighty God; where he was well assured he should for ever be free enough from kings and dukes.

There was in the county of Northampton a gentleman of very able parts, and clear affections to the publick good, no stranger to the court in former times, nor to the Duke of Buckingham, with whom the doctor used to communicate affairs, and who was then a parliament-man of much esteem; to him the doctor in a letter discovers all, shews him the posture of the duke, how much they both were deceived in him. This letter was let fall, by him that was intrusted to convey it, about Temple-Bar, and handed from one to another until it came to Sir Henry Spillers; who, having pondered the contents, concluded it was a purchase that would ingratiate him unto the duke, and so immediately presented it to him.

The duke was troubled to read his faults and fate so shrewdly intimated and presaged. His temper was exceeding good, and he could manage his affections many times with much serenity and moderation; but now he was quite off, and could not think of any thing but revenge. But it pleased God to cut the duke out other work; for the cry of Rochelle, and the Protestants of France, was so exceeding great, and so much resented by the parliament, that the duke resolved to vindicate his honour by relieving them. And whilst he was busy to set that fleet out, and furnish forces, he could not undertake that revenge intended against Dr. Preston.

All this time the doctor's labour in preaching and studying was exceeding great; but that which spent and wore him out, was his troubles for the churches' safety

and prosperity. Often he would inculcate that, 2 Cor. xi. 28, "That which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches." When his body therefore began to be sick and languish, he was content a little to abate, and thought a country-house in some good air might help, as formerly it had done; and accordingly took one at Linton, near the hills, about six miles off, which he furnished, and purposed to be in all the week, and come on Saturdays to preach on the Lord's-days; and, had this course been taken time enough, good might have been done. But now he feared solicitude would but be changed into solitude, the air of suitable converse, he doubted, would be wanting there; and being alone, he saw, would too much gratify his melancholy. The spring therefore approaching, he was willing to consult with some physicians; and London being far off, he sent to Bury for Dr. Despotine. His present malady was want of rest, which now tobacco would not help him to, as formerly it had done; and therefore he proposed letting blood. The doctor plainly told him, that might perhaps allay his heats, and purchase sleep; but, on other accounts, it would be fatal to him. He was enticed, notwithstanding, with the hopes of present ease, and so was let blood, but never lived to repair that loss: for sinking more and more, he went to London, and took advice of those that were best acquainted with his state of health; by their advice he retired a little to Newington, to a friend of his that lived there, and then to Hertfordshire, to a thinner and more penetrating air. The malady, they all agreed, was in his lungs, which were not ulcerated neither, but obstructed and oppressed with stiff and clammy matter that he could not void. Perspiration was what he wanted, and they supposed a penetrating air might do the cure; but that was found too searching and corrosive for the other parts, which were pervious enough and penetrable. He therefore thought upon Northamptonshire, his native country. He had at Preston, four miles from Heyford, a very dear and

bosom-friend, that was ambitious of entertaining good men : old Mr. Dod was but a mile off, and being invited thither, he pitched upon it, where he enjoyed, with great contentment, what air, converse of friends, and loving entertainment could afford, and at the first was much refreshed by it ; but nature being spent, and no foundation being left to work upon, all his refreshing quickly flagged. He had before made use of Dr. Ashworth, and he was one of much experience, and knew his body well ; therefore he thought of riding over to Oxford to him, which he did, and there continued about twelve days, and consulted with such as were there of any note. Dr. Ashworth was persuaded that the scurvy was his disease, and that the London doctors had all mistook their mark, and therefore pitched upon applications suitable : a great error for so experienced a doctor. The old man, upon this persuasion, came over unto Preston with him, steeped and strained scurvy-grass, and gave him drenches, able to have weakened a stronger man than he was now ; and having stayed and tampered with him about three weeks, and finding nothing answer his expectation, he took his last leave of him, giving such order and direction as he thought good, and returned to Oxford, July 9, 1628.

This fancy of the scurvy failing, and Dr. Ashworth being gone, he resigned up himself to God alone, and let all care of physic and the doctors go. He had a servant who had been laborious with him, and whom he often used as a friend. To him he therefore now unbosomed himself, not only touching the vanity and emptiness of all things here below, but his own belief and expectation of a sudden change ; not of my company, (said he,) for I shall still converse with God and saints, but of my place, and way of doing it. His *will* was made some years before, but he was doubtful, if it came to be proved, it might be baffled ; and therefore purposed to wave it, and make a deed of gift to him, that was in that *will* his executer, with such restrictions and limita-

tions as he thought good, all which he set down with his own hand, wherein he carefully provided for his mother during life, and both his brothers. His books, and all the furniture and goods in his lodgings at Emmanuel college, he gave to one of his pupils that was fellow there, whom he always greatly favoured. Some exhibitions he gave to the scholars there, to be disposed of from time to time, by him that was executer. And as he truly valued, so he liberally rewarded, his servant's faithfulness. And having thus disencumbered himself of worldly cares, he took care for the places he possessed, prayed for the college, that it might continue a flourishing nursery of religion and learning; and that God would furnish Lincoln's-Inn, from time to time, with able, preaching ministers, and the lecture at Cambridge, that had cost so much trouble in the procuring.

The night before he died, being Saturday, he went to bed, and lay about three hours, desirous to sleep, but slept not; then said he, "My dissolution is at hand, let me go to my home, and to Jesus Christ, who hath bought me with his precious blood:" and so lay still as in a slumber, till about two o'clock in the morning; then drinking, and resting on his servant's arms, he fell into a cold and clammy sweat; which he told them was the messenger of death: and so continued for about two hours very silent. About four o'clock, he said, "I feel death coming to my heart, my pain shall now be quickly turned into joy." At this his friends were called that were present in the house, who spake unto him, but had no answer from him as they were used to have. Then they all kneeled down, and a reverend divine there present prayed. When prayer was ended, he looked on them, and asked what day it was, and being answered, that it was the Sabbath-day, "A fit day, (said he,) to be sacrificed on: I have accompanied saints on earth, and now I shall accompany angels in heaven." Then turning away his head, he presently gave up the ghost, being near 41 years of age. It was about five o'clock on the Lord's-

day, but to him an everlasting Sabbath. He never (by his good will,) rested on that day, since God was truly known to him, till now; God gave him therefore an everlasting rest. No man deserved better funeral solemnities: but Mr. Dod was much against it; and his friends at Cambridge, who did highly honour him, and desired nothing more than to have waited on his dust unto his long home, were now obliged to attend the election of another master: so he was buried decently, but without state, in Fawsley church in Northamptonshire, July 20, 1628. Mr. Dod, the minister of that place, preached a sermon on that occasion to a vast congregation of serious people, who were there assembled together.



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THE  
**BREAST-PLATE**  
OF  
**FAITH AND LOVE;**

OR,  
THE GROUND AND EXERCISE OF FAITH AND LOVE,

*As set upon Christ their object, and expressed in Good  
Works, explained.*

—◆—  
IN THREE PARTS,  
—◆—

By JOHN PRESTON, D. D.

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TO THE

# CHRISTIAN READER.

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CHRISTIAN READER,

INNUMERABLE are the sleights of satan to hinder a Christian in his course towards heaven, by exciting the corruption of his own heart to disturb him, when he is about to do any good ; or by discouraging him with inward terrors, when he would solace himself with heavenly comforts ; or by disheartening him under the fears of sufferings, when he should be resolute in a good cause. A type whereof were the Israelites, whose servitude was redoubled, when they turned themselves to forsake Egypt : wherefore we have much need of Christian fortitude, according to that direction : “ Watch ye, stand fast, quit yourselves like men.”

But as in wars, the chief strength of the soldiers lieth in their captain, so in spiritual conflicts, all a Christian's strength is in Christ, and from him. For, before our conversion, we were of no strength : since our conversion, we are not sufficient of ourselves to think a good thought. And, to work out from the saints all self-confidence, God, by their falls, teacheth them, “ to rejoice in the Lord Jesus, and to have no confidence in the flesh.”

Whatsoever Christ hath for us, is made ours by faith, which is the hand of the soul, enriching it by receiving Christ, who is "the treasure hid in the field," and with him, those unsearchable riches of grace, which are revealed and offered in the gospel: yea, it is part of our spiritual armour. That which was fabulously spoken of the race of giants, is truly said of a Christian, he is born with his armour upon him; as soon as he is regenerate, he is armed. It is called a *breast-plate*, because it preserves the heart; a *long, large shield*, (as the word signifies) which is useful to defend the whole man from all sorts of assaults: which part of spiritual armour, and how it is to be managed, is declared in the two former parts of the ensuing treatise, which was delivered in nine sermons.

Now as all rivers return into the sea, whence they came, so the believing soul, having received all from Christ, returneth all to Christ. For thus the believer reasoneth: "Was God's undeserved love such to me, that he spared not his only-begotten Son, but gave him to die for me? It is but equal that I should live to him, die for him, bring my strength, time, gifts, liberty, all that I have, all that I am, into his service, to his glory." That affection, whence these resolutions arise, is called Love, which so inclineth the soul, that it moveth in a direct line towards God. And the perfection of our spirits cannot but be in union with the Chief of spirits, who communicateth his goodness to the creature, according to its capacity. This affection of love, as it reflecteth upon Christ, being a fruit and effect of his love to us apprehended by faith, is the subject of the third part of this treatise, which was delivered in seven sermons.

The judicious author, out of a piercing insight into the

methods of the tempter, knowing upon what rocks the faith of many suffers shipwreck ; that neither the weak Christian might lose the comfort of his faith, through want of evidences, nor the presumptuous rest upon a fancy instead of faith, throughout the whole treatise, and more especially in the last sermon, discourseth of good works, as they arise from faith and love. This is the sum of the faithful and fruitful labours of this reverend, learned, and godly minister of the gospel ; who, whilst he lived, was an example of the life of faith and love, and of good works, to so many as were acquainted with his even walking with God, in the several turnings and occasions of his life. But it will be too much injury to the reader to be detained longer in the porch. We now dismiss thee to the reading of this profitable work, beseeching God to increase thy faith, and to perfect love in thy heart, that thou mayest be fruitful in good works.

Thine in our Lord Jesus Christ,

RICHARD SIBS.

✍ All Dr. Preston's Sermons were extemporary, and taken in short-hand by those that heard them, from whose copies they are now printed.



THE  
BREAST-PLATE  
OF  
FAITH AND LOVE.

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PART I.—*Of Faith.*

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ROMANS I. 17.

*For by it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.*

IN the words read unto you, St. Paul tells the Romans, that he is not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. “For (saith he,) it is the power of God to salvation.” It is that which, being received, will bring men to heaven; being rejected, will shut men up in hell; and therefore it is of no small moment. He gives a reason, in these words, why it is the power of God to salvation; “By it the righteousness of God is revealed.” That is, the righteousness which is of God, which only God accepts, and by which alone men can be saved, is revealed by the gospel, and no other way. But to what purpose is this revealed, if I know not how to come by it? Many things

are revealed, but how shall I know that they are mine? Therefore he adds, "It is the power of God to salvation to every one that believes." As it is revealed by the gospel, so something is to be done on our part:—as God manifests it, so we must receive it, by faith. "Yea, but (say you,) I have not so strong a faith, I cannot believe as I would." Well, but the apostle tells us, faith hath degrees: "It is revealed from faith to faith." That is, one receives it in one degree, and the same afterward receives it in a greater degree. All are alike justified, but there is a difference in faith; some is stronger, some is weaker.\*

The point to be gathered out of these words is this, "That righteousness, by which alone we can be saved, now in the time of the gospel, is revealed and offered to all that will take it." It is not a matter of light moment, but an exceeding great thing, to see the righteousness of God revealed. It is the great and glorious mystery of the gospel, which the angels desire to pry into; which made St. Paul in his ministry so glorious; which swallowed up his thoughts, that he could not tell how to express it;—that now, in this last age, "Christ hath revealed," through us, "the unsearchable riches of his grace." Therefore he prays, that "God would open their eyes, that they might comprehend with all the saints, the height, and length," and breadth of that redemption, which Christ had wrought for them. It passeth our comprehension; yet he prays that they might comprehend it in such a measure as is possible, though there be a height, and breadth and depth therein which could not be measured. And this is it that is revealed to the souls of men, the escaping of hell and death,—such free access to the

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\* The expression used by the apostle, δικαιοσυνη θεου εν αυτω αποκαλυπτεται εκ πισως εις πισιν, may, and probably ought, to be rendered, "Therein the righteousness of God by faith, is revealed to, or in order to, faith." That is, is revealed to our faith, or in order to beget faith in us. See *Benson's Commentary* on the words.

throne of grace as none before had ; this liberty, to be made the sons of God, and heirs of heaven ; yea, kings and priests to God. All this, I say, is now revealed, which before was not.

This is said to be revealed, partly because this, of all other things, was never written in the hearts of men : for though the moral law was written therein, they had not the least light to see *this* ; partly because it is now opened in a larger measure than it was heretofore in the times of the prophets. The door was a little open before, but now it is wide open, and nothing is hid from the souls of men that is necessary for them to know. And further, it is revealed not only in regard of the preachers that make it known, but likewise in regard of them that hear it : for there is a greater measure of the spirit of revelation dispensed under the gospel. Therefore, Eph. i. 18, the apostle prays, that “the eyes of their understanding might be opened, that they might know what was the hope of their calling, and the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.” For what is it to have light, if men’s eyes be shut to whom it shines ?

Again, the thing revealed is the righteousness by which alone men can be saved. This is the main point ; which, that you may understand, I will open by answering these six questions :—I. How this righteousness of God, (*i. e.* which is accepted of God,) saves. II. How it is offered to us. III. To whom it is offered. IV. Upon what qualifications. V. How it is made ours. And VI. and lastly, What is required of us when we have it. These hang one upon another, but for memory sake I have thus distinguished them.

1. How doth it save ? I answer, this righteousness saves after the same manner that the unrighteousness of Adam did condemn : let us set these two together, and the thing will be plain. First, as Adam was one man, yet the common root of all mankind, of whom all that are guilty of death, and shall be damned, must be born ; so Christ, the second Adam, stands as a publick person,

and the root of all that shall be engrafted into, and born of him. Secondly, as Adam's first unrighteousness, the first sin he committed, is communicated to men, and made theirs by imputation,—and not so only, but by inherency also,—(for it hath bred in them original sin;) after the same manner, the righteousness that Christ wrought is made ours by imputation; and this imputative righteousness of Christ worketh a righteousness which is inherent in us. Lastly, as after this unrighteousness comes death, which reigns in us, bringing every thing into subjection, so that all the comforts men possess are overcome in some degree while we live here,—(all sicknesses, and troubles, and crosses being as so many skirmishes which death hath with us, before the main battle comes;) so in Christ life reigns over all, and brings all into subjection to him: that is, it brings all the troubles man sustaineth, all the enemies he hath, yea, death and sin, into subjection,—by degrees in this life, and after death perfectly. Now, you see the miserable fruit of Adam's fall; you see, by lamentable experience, what original sin is, and how much it hath corrupted us; why then should you think it a strange thing that the righteousness of Christ\* should be imputed? Again, death, you see, reigns over all by one; why then will you not believe that life may reign over all men; that is, bring every enemy of ours into subjection by the other? For the righteousness of one saves, as the unrighteousness of the other condemns. Another expression I find in 2 Cor. v. 21, “As Christ was made sin for us, who knew no sin, so are we made the righteousness of God in him.” That is, though Christ was a man without sin in himself, yet our sin was imputed to him, and he was by God reckoned as a sinner; and then he kills him, putting our curse upon

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\* By the *righteousness of Christ*, he means Christ's *obedience unto death*,—the one procuring cause of our salvation in all its branches. He does not mean merely his *active* obedience, in opposition to, or contradistinction from the *passive*.

him ; so to us that are free from righteousness, 'Christ is made righteousness ; so that God looks on us as if we had performed perfect righteousness ; and when that is done, he saves us. And so much for the first question.

2. But when we hear that this righteousness saves, the question is, "How shall we come by it ? How shall we get a share in the salvation ?" I answer, It is freely given to us, even as fathers give lands to their children. And as kings give pardons, and titles, and honours, and riches, out of their clemency, because they will, to shew their munificence and goodness to their subjects ; so doth God give this righteousness ; as you find it expressed Isai. ix. 6, "To us a Child is born, to us a Son is given." And John iii. 16, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." And Rom. v. 17, it is called "the gift of righteousness:" that is, a thing which God freely, voluntarily, and only because he will, bestows on men, not looking on any worthiness in them of the same. "If through the offence of one, death reigned in all, much more they which receive abundance of grace, and the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." So that God gives it freely, out of his mere love, without any other motive or end but to shew his munificence, and to make manifest, in the ages to come, the unsearchable riches of Christ ; the great and exceedingly glorious riches that he hath provided for them that love him.

But what is the reason that God will have it communicated to the sons of men no other way but by gift ? You shall see, Rom. iv. 5, that it is for these causes :—first, "That no man might boast in himself ; but that he that rejoiceth may rejoice in the Lord." If any other manner of conveyance had been made, we should have had something to boast of ; but coming merely from God as a gift, we have cause to glory in God, and nothing else. Again, it is a gift, that men may learn to depend upon God for it. God will have no man challenge it as his due ; for it is a mere grace. Lastly, it is a gift, "that it may be sure

to all the seed." If there had been any thing required at our hands, (as, "This do;" "fulfil this law, and you shall have this righteousness;") it had not been sure; nay, none had been saved: for by the law is transgression and wrath. But being by gift, it is firm and sure to all the seed: for when a thing is freely given, and nothing expected, but taking it, and thanksgiving for it, what is more sure?

3. But when you hear this righteousness is given, the next question will be, "To whom is it given? If it be only given to some, what comfort is this to me?" It is given to every man that will receive it in the way God hath appointed; there is not a man excepted: for this we have the sure Word of God, which will not fail. When you have the charter of a king well confirmed, you reckon it a matter of great moment: what is it then when you have the charter of God himself? which you shall evidently see in those two places, Mark xvi. 15, "Go and preach the gospel to every creature under heaven." What is that? Go and tell every man, without exception, that there are good news for him,—Christ hath died for him; and if he will take him, and accept of his righteousness, he shall have it: restrain it not, but go and tell every man under heaven. The other text is, Rev xxii. 17, "Whosoever will, let him come and take of the waters of life freely." Whosoever will come, (none excepted,) may have life, and it shall cost him nothing. Many other places of Scripture there are to prove the generality of the offer; and having a sure word for it, consider it.

4. The next thing a man will desire to know is this, "What qualifications are expected? Doth not God require to find something in us, if he give it us?" I answer, that it is offered to all; and no qualification at all is required as pre-existent to be found in us,\* but any

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\* He seems to mean no *meritorious* qualification, for otherwise the declaration is false: conviction of sin, humiliation and sorrow for it, hatred to it, and a fixt resolution to forsake it, are required to be found

may come and take it. God requires no qualification as concerning our sins : he saith not, you shall be pardoned so your sins be of such a number, or of such a nature ; but though they be never so many, though of never so extraordinary a nature, though they may be aggravated with all the circumstances that can be, yet there is no exception at all of you ; the pardon runs in general terms,—“This is the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world.” And seeing it is in general terms, why will you restrain it? You see it runs in general, and so you may take it. And as it is propounded generally, so it is generally executed, 1 Cor. vi. 9. You shall find the greatest sins that can be named are there pardoned : “Be not deceived,” you know that “no fornicator, nor adulterer, nor unclean person shall enter into the kingdom of God ; and such were some of you : but now you are washed, now you are sanctified, now you are justified.” Though they had committed the greatest sins, you see, it is generally executed without exception.

But there is another sort of qualification. “Is there not something first to be done? I know that though I have committed all the sins of the world, yet they shall not prejudice my pardon ; but I must do something to qualify me for it.” No, not any thing as precedent to the pardon.\* It is only required of thee to come with



in every man, previous to his acceptance of Christ as his righteousness. See Isai. lxvi. 2, Matt. v. 3, 4. This indeed is acknowledged, nay, insisted upon, in many of the subsequent parts of this discourse.

\* This way of speaking is not scriptural, and certainly it is dangerous to the souls of men, leading to the grossest antinomianism. *Not any thing as precedent to pardon!* What then did Isaiah mean, ch. i. 16? “Put away the evil of your doings from before my eyes ; cease to do evil ; learn to do well ;” then, “though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow,” &c. And again, ch. lv. 7? “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts ; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and abundantly pardon.” And as this is the uniform doctrine of the Old

the hand of faith and receive it. In the midst of all thy unworthiness, whatsoever it be, lay hold on the pardon and embrace it, and it shall be thine. But you will object, "Then to what end is the doctrine of humiliation? To what end is the law preached to be a school-

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Testament, so it is also that of the New. The harbinger of Christ was sent "to prepare his way, to give knowledge of salvation to his people;" (or to inform them in what way they might obtain salvation)—"by the remission of sins." Now, how did he do this? By assuring them *that not any thing was necessary to be done as precedent to pardon?* By no means; but by insisting on the absolute necessity, in all characters and descriptions of people, of *repentance*, and *fruits meet for repentance*; denouncing vengeance soon to take place on all who did not comply with his exhortation. See Matt. iii. 7—12, Luke iii. 7—18. And in perfect agreement with the doctrine of his forerunner was the testimony of Jesus, when he entered on his publick ministry. "The kingdom of God," (the kingdom predicted by Daniel, ch. ii. 44, and ch. vii. 14, to be set up under the Messiah,) "is at hand; *ἤγγικεν*, hath approached:—"Repent ye, and believe the gospel:" *i. e.* the glad tidings of salvation. And when first twelve, and afterwards seventy were sent forth to bear the same testimony, Matt. x. 7, Luke x. 1, "they went out and preached that men should repent," Mark vi. 12. And when Christ gave them their last and most perfect commission, it was in these words, "That *repentance and remission of sins* should be preached in his name among all nations," Luke xxiv. 47; a commission which they exactly and regularly executed, after their most perfect inspiration and full illumination on the day of Pentecost, saying to the convicted, alarmed, and inquiring multitude, *Repent, and be baptized, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins: repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out*, Acts ii. 38, and iii. 19; and testifying to the Jewish rulers, ch. v. 30, 31, that God had raised up and exalted that Jesus (whom they had slain,) *to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins*:—observe, first *repentance*, and then *forgiveness of sins*:—forgiveness of sins is never conferred on any but the truly penitent. It seems to have been the error of some divines in Dr. Preston's time, to speak of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, even justifying faith, the faith whereby we receive him as *The Lord our righteousness*, as preceding *repentance towards God*; contrary certainly to the apostolic method of teaching, which was to testify to all, first, *repentance towards God*; and then to preach to the penitent, *faith in our Lord Jesus Christ*, Acts xx. 21.

master, if no qualification be required?" I answer, humiliation is not required as a qualification :\* for no tears of ours can give satisfaction ; neither is it any part of sanctification. But how is it required then ? As that without which we will not come to Christ. As for example : If we say to a man, The physician is ready to heal you ; before you will be healed, you must have a sense of your sickness. This sense is not required by the physician ; (for the physician is ready to heal him ; ) but if he be not sick, and have a sense of it, he will not come to the physician. If at a general feast it be proclaimed, Let all come hither that be hungry ; a man is not excluded if he be not hungry ; but if he be not, he will not come : therefore we preach that none receive the gospel but the poor ; those that be humble, and touched with a sense of sin and wrath ; and we preach so, because indeed no man will come but he that is so.

5. In the next place, the question will be, "How is this righteousness of Christ made ours?" or, "what is to be done of him to whom it belongs?" To this I answer, though no precedent qualification be required,† yet this must be taken : a man must not reflect on himself, and consider, Am I worthy of it ? but he must take it as a plaster, which if it be not applied, will not heal ; or as meat, which if it be not eaten, doth not nourish. As the husband woos his spouse, and says thus, "I require nothing at thy hands, no condition at all : I do not examine whether thou art wealthy, or not ; whether thou be fair, or not ; it is no matter what thou art : I require thee simply to take me for thy husband." After this manner comes Christ to us. We must not say, Am I worthy to make a spouse for Christ ? Am I fit to receive so great mercies ? Thou art only to take him. When

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\* Certainly it is, though not as a *meritorious* qualification, or as a qualification which we are able to work in ourselves, but which we must apply to God in prayer to work in us.

† See the above notes.

we exclude all conditions, we exclude such a frame of mind which we think is necessarily required to make us worthy to take him. As if a physician come and offer thee a medicine, by which thou mayest be healed, and say, I require nothing at your hands only to drink it, for else it will do you no good; so God offers the righteousness of Christ, which is that which heals the souls of men. God looks for nothing at your hands; it matters not what your person is, only you must take it. But when you hear you must take it, the question will be, What this taking is? I answer, This taking is nothing else but that which we call *faith*; and therefore, that we may not err in the main point, I will declare what faith is. And it is nothing else but this, when these two things concur, that God the Father will give his Son, and freely offers righteousness, and we receive this righteousness, taking Christ for our husband, our King and Lord. But you will say, "Faith is more: it is an act of the understanding assenting to truths for the authority of the speaker; therefore the mind and will must concur to make up this faith." For the better understanding of it, mark this word, "The righteousness of God is revealed:" wherein it is likewise implied (though it be not expressed,) that it is offered. For to what purpose is it to see that there is such a righteousness, if it be nothing to us? But it is so revealed, that it is also offered. Now, being both revealed and offered, you must find something in men answerable to both these: 1. To the revelation of it, the understanding must answer, assenting to it as a truth, that Christ is come in the flesh, and offered to all men: and 2. To answer to the offer, there must be an act of the will, whereby it comes and takes this righteousness. Both these, 1 Tim. i. 15, are put together, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy to be received, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." It is true, saith the understanding, and therefore believes it; it is worthy to be received, saith the will, therefore comes and accepts it. In a matter of marriage, if one come and tell a woman,

“There is such a man that is willing to bestow himself on you, if you will take him, and accept him for your husband :” to make up the marriage on her part, she must first believe that this message is true; that there is such a man, and that *that* man is willing to have her. This is an act of her understanding. But will you take him, and accept him for your husband? Now comes the will; and the concurrence of these two makes up the match. So we come and tell you, there is such a One, the Messiah, that is willing to bestow himself on you; if you believe that we deliver the message from Christ, and do consequently embrace and take him, you are now justified; this is the very translation of you from death to life; at this very instant you are delivered from Satan, and salvation is come to your heart.

Now, because this taking of Christ is the main point which makes Christ ours, and the want thereof is the cause that men are condemned, we must tell you what is required therein, that you may know what it is. And first, there must not be an error of the person: secondly, you must understand aright what this taking is: thirdly, then a complete, deliberate will must concur to this action of taking. And these three particulars being declared, we shall not easily be deceived in the matter. First, when you hear of this righteousness of Christ, and of its being made ours, you must know, that first Christ himself is made ours, and then his righteousness. As you must first have the husband, and then the benefits that come by him. I say, then, take heed that there be not an error of the person; that you mistake him not. Therefore, when you come to make this marriage, you must know that Christ is most holy, that he is also such a One as will bring persecution with him; (as he says of himself, that he had not where to lay his head;) such a One as for whose sake you must part with every thing; such a One as for whose sake you must be hated. Some would have the man, but they know not the man; and so many thousands are deceived that are willing to take Christ, but they know not what they take; they understand not Christ aright. There is an error of the person,

and so a miss of the match, and consequently of justification. For they take him not so as to make him their Lord; so as to be subject unto him; they do not consider that he requires such things at their hands. And this excludes all ignorant men, who take not Christ indeed, but only in their own fancy.

Secondly, If there be no mistake of the person, yet what is this taking? In marriage there is a certain form to be observed; and if that form be missed of, then the match is missed. This taking then is only this; so to take him, as to be divorced from all other lovers; so to serve him, as that you serve no other master; so to be subject to him, as that you be subject to nothing in the world besides. This is properly to take Christ: and this excludes the greatest part of men, who are ready to take Christ, and yet they love the world too: for God says, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father, and of the Son, is not in him." You must have your affections weaned from every kind of vanity. Go through the whole universe, look on all the things that are therein; riches, pleasures, and honours, wife, and children; if your heart be not weaned from all of them, you take him not as a husband. All those likewise are excluded, who will serve Christ and their riches too, their credit too, their praise with men too. For Christ tells them, no man can serve both. You must serve him alone, and be obedient to none but him. If you do so, you take him for your Lord indeed. So likewise, many will be subject to him as a king, but they will be subject to their lusts too. If their lusts command them, they cannot deny them; some they will reserve. And you know how many this excludes. "If ye receive the praise of men, how can ye believe?" John v. 44. That is, if you be not weaned and divorced from all, you cannot believe. Though you be the off-scouring of men, though you be mocked and scorned, it matters not; but if you seek the praise of men, you cannot believe. While you seek the praise of men, how can you take me for your God and Lord, to serve me altogether? So that to take Christ with a justifying faith, is

nothing else but to receive him, as it is expressed in many places of Scripture, John i. 11, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not; but to as many as received him he gave power to become the sons of God, even to them that believed on his name." And so it is not (as the papists say,) a mere act of the understanding, but a taking of him for your God and Saviour, to whom alone you will be subject.

Thirdly and lastly, when these two are done, so that there is no error, either in the person or the form of taking, there is yet one thing more remains, and that is, to take and accept him with a complete, a deliberate, and true will. For, even as in other matches, supposing the person be known, and the form duly observed, yet if there do not concur a complete will, it is not properly a match. And therefore those matches are unlawful which are made before years of discretion, or when a man is in a phrensy, because there is then no complete or deliberate will; so in this spiritual match, you shall see how many the want of such a will excludes. First, I say, it must be complete, which excludes all that prize Christ a little, that could be content to have Christ, but it is rather an inclination than a complete will; that would have Christ, but not yet; that would live a little longer at ease, and have a little more wealth, but are not come to a resolute, peremptory will; that have only a weak inclination, which is not enough. Again, it must be a deliberate will; and this excludes all those, that will take Christ in a good mood, on some sudden flash, when they are affected at a good sermon, and have some good motions in their minds; that will (at such a time) be content to take Christ, to serve him, obey him, and to forsake their sins; whose will is not deliberate, but they suddenly choose, and as suddenly refuse Christ. Last of all, as it must be complete and deliberate, so it must be a true will; that is, it must be free; and that excludes all them that, merely for servile fear, at the time of death, in the day of sickness and trouble, will take Christ. Indeed, you can scarce come to any, but, in such a case, he will

profess, that he is content to take Christ for his Lord and Saviour ; but this is done by constraint, and so the will is not free. So I say, when the will is complete, deliberate, and free, in the choice of Christ, the match is made, and you are justified.

6. And lastly : But after the match is made, something is required. Therefore there is one question more ; and that is, What is this that is required after making of the match ? I answer, 1. It is required that you love your husband Jesus Christ, that you forsake father and mother, and become one spirit with him, as a man is one flesh with his wife : for you are now bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh. 2. Again, it is required that you should walk no longer after the flesh, but after the Spirit. You must have your flesh crucified, with all the affections and lusts of it. 3. You must part with every thing for his sake ; whether it be riches, honours, or credit, or whatsoever it be, you must be ready to let all go. 4. You must be ready to undergo any thing for his sake. You must take him for worse, as well as for better. “ You must be content to be hated of all men for his sake. You must take up your cross, and follow him.” 5. You must do much, as well as suffer much for him. He died to this end, “ that he might purchase to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” You must respect him as a wife doth her husband, not as a servant doth a hard master. You must not look on his commandments as a hard task, but as one that hath his heart inflamed to walk in them ; as a loving wife, that needs not to be bidden to do this or that ; but if the doing of it may advantage her husband, it will be a greater grief to her to let it lie undone.

But now men say, “ This is a hard condition, I little thought of it.” It is true, the condition is hard, and that is the reason that so few are willing to come in. They start back when they understand these after-clap conditions ; that they must part with all ; that they must be persecuted ; that their will must be perfectly subject to

the will of Christ ; that they must be holy as he is holy ; that the same mind must be in them that was in Christ Jesus ; that they must be of those peculiar people of God. And therefore we have told you, that none will come in to take Christ for their husband, till they be heavy-laden, and have felt the weight of satan's yoke. Till then they will not come under the yoke of Christ. Those that be humble, that have their hearts broken, that know what the wrath of God is, that have their consciences awakened to see sin, will come in, and be glad to have Christ, though on these conditions ; but the other will not. If you will have Christ on these conditions, you may. But we preach mostly in vain. The greatest part of the world refuse Christ, because they will not leave their covetousness and idleness, their sports and pleasures ; they will not do the things that Christ requires at their hands ; and all because they are not humbled, they know not what sin means. Whereas, should God shew it to them in its right colours, were their consciences enlightened, they would take him with all their hearts.

But another objection comes in ; “ I would come in, but how shall I do it ? I want power and ability, I cannot mortify the deeds of the body.” To this I give a speedy answer, “ If thou canst come with this resolution to take Christ, take no care for the other. For as soon as thou art his, he will give thee another spirit, he will enable thee to do all things. It is true, with thy own heart thou art not able to do it ; but what if God give thee a new heart, and a new spirit ? When the match is concluded between him and us, he sends his Spirit into our hearts, and this Spirit gives us ability, making us like Christ, and causing us to delight in the duties of new obedience. Therefore, take not care for ability, only labour for an honest heart, armed with this resolution ; “ I am resolved to take Christ from henceforth ;” and you shall find another Spirit to enable you.

And now, that we may not let all this go without some application, we will hereof make two uses. The first great use to be made of it is, to learn hence to see how

great the sin of men is, and how just is their condemnation for the same, that when this righteousness of God is revealed from heaven, they despise these glad tidings of salvation. This very thing that we preach to you, is the greatest work that ever God did. Therefore, if you reject it, know that your sin is exceeding great. We that preach the gospel, are messengers sent from the Father, to invite every one of you to come to the marriage of his Son. If you will not come, (as some of you are young, and mind other things; others of you have gone long in an old track, and will not turn; some have married a wife; others have other business, and therefore you will not come): I say, if you refuse, the Lord will deal with you as with them in the gospel, he will have you brought and slain before his face. And we come not from the Father only, but we are also sent from the Son. He is a suitor to you, and hath despatched us as ambassadors to woo you, and "to beseech you to be reconciled." If you will come, he hath made known his mind to you; you may have him: if you will not come, you will make him angry: and you had need to "kiss the Son lest he be angry." Though he be so merciful, as "not to quench the smoking flax, nor to break the bruised reed," yet notwithstanding, that Son hath "feet like burning brass: he hath a two-edged sword in his hand, and his eyes are like a flame of fire:" so shall you find him to be, if you refuse him. Take all the sins you have committed, there is none like this, none shall be so much laid to your charge at the day of judgment, as your rejecting the Son, and his righteousness, revealed and freely offered to you.

Therefore, when you hear the offer of Christ, let every man examine himself how he stands affected unto it. For all hearers are divided into these two sorts: some are said to be worthy, and some unworthy. As when Christ sent away his disciples, "If any were worthy, their peace was to rest upon them:" if they were not worthy, they were to "shake off the dust of their feet against that city." I say, consider if you be what the Lord calls worthy. For if you find your hearts to long after it, if you prize

it much, so that you can reckon all things as dross and dung in comparison of it, and will sell all to buy this pearl, then are you worthy. But if, when you hear it, you neglect it, and attend unto it coldly, you are unworthy ; and against such we are to shake off the dust of our feet. That is, God shall shake you off as dust, when you come for salvation to him at the day of judgment.

If, in examination, you find yourselves unworthy, then give no rest to yourselves, but enter into a serious consideration of your sins, attend on God's ordinances, make use of all that hath been delivered concerning humiliation, and give not over until you have attained this eager desire after Christ. Indeed this is wrought by God himself, but give not you over. This is what St. John calls *drawing* ; ("None can come to me, except the Father *draw* him :") and that is done, when God gives another will ; when, on the propounding of Christ, he gives the nature of a lamb, changing the heart, and working such an inclination to, Christ, as is in the iron to follow the loadstone. If nothing will make thee give over, if thou wilt beseech him, and give him no rest, I will assure thee, God cannot deny thee ; and the longer he holdeth thee off, the better answer thou shalt have in the end. And when thou hast Christ, thou hast that which cannot be expressed ; for with him thou hast all things.

I proceed now to the second use that is to be made of this doctrine ; which is this : Consider what it is to refuse, yea, what it is to defer your acceptance of it. God may take your deferring for a denial. You that think, "Well, I will take it, but not yet ;" take heed lest you never have such an opportunity again. I say, be exhorted, be moved to take it now. This I speak to you that be humble, to so many among you as have broken hearts. Others may take him if they will ; but they will not ; they mind not this doctrine, they regard not things of this nature ; they will take him (if they can) when they lie a dying ; but now they have something else to do. But you that "mourn in Sion," you that have broken hearts, that know the bitterness of sin, to such as you is this Word of

salvation sent. Others have nothing to do with it; not but that others shall have him, if they will come; but they will not take him on such conditions. It may be, they would have redemption, and salvation by him; but they will not take him for their king. They that be humbled, that have their hearts wounded with the sense of sin, are willing to take him on his own terms, to keep his commandments, and not to think them grievous; to bear his burden, and think it light; to take his yoke, and count it easy; to give all they have for him, and think all too little; to suffer persecution for his sake, and rejoice in it; to be content to be scoffed at, and hated of men; to do, to suffer any thing for his sake; and when all this is done, to regard it as nothing, to reckon themselves unprofitable servants, to account of all as not worthy of him. Therefore be not you shy in taking him, for you have free liberty.

But, before I dismiss you, let me speak a word to you that be not yet humbled. Let me beseech you to consider three things to move you to take Christ. 1. The great danger that is in not taking of him. If you could be well without him, you might sit still as you are; but you shall die for want of him. When a man's case is this; "I see without Christ I must perish; I must lose my life; that is the penalty, such is the danger if I refuse him;" methinks this should move him. 2. Consider the benefit of taking him, as well as the danger of refusing him. If you will have him, you shall with him have a kingdom. You shall change for the better; for whatsoever you part with for his sake, you shall have an hundred-fold for it in this life. If you forego any pleasure, you shall have for it the joy of the Holy Ghost, far exceeding it. If you part with riches, you shall be truly rich in the treasures of another world. If you lose friends, you shall have God for your friend, and shall be a favourite in the court of heaven. 3. Consider that you shall be sure to have him; you shall not be deceived: for God hath declared that to be his will; and it stands now with his justice, as well as with his mercy, to give Christ. His word is a

corner stone, and you may build on it. Nay, by two immutable things he hath confirmed it ; his word and his oath : and “ heaven and earth may pass, but they shall not pass : ” you may build on them to have Christ, and salvation by him. When Paul had delivered God’s mind to the Galatians, he declares, that if an angel from heaven should tell them the foundation was sandy ; nay, if he himself should preach another doctrine, they were not to believe him. Therefore, if thou wilt take him and have him, trust perfectly in the grace that is revealed by Jesus Christ : do it not by halves ; saying with thyself, It may be I shall be saved, it may be not. Thou mayest build on it, thou mayest venture thy life on it.

All these things being now considered, the great danger in refusing, the inestimable benefit in accepting, and the certainty of enjoying Christ, if you are thoroughly willing ; then venture on him. Why do you stand off ? What can we say more to persuade you ? If you will take him, and his righteousness, you may have it. God hath committed this to us ; “ what we loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.” He hath given us the keys of heaven and hell, and if we open the gates of heaven to any, they shall stand open ; and now in the preaching of the Word, the gates of heaven stand open to every one of you. Therefore come in while it is called to-day, before the sun set on you, as you know not how soon it may be. Indeed, if we had not made the offer, the danger had been ours, and we should have perished for your sakes : but seeing we have “ made manifest the whole council of God, we are now free from the blood of every one of you : ” for we have made known the will of God to the full. You know what is offered to you ; and if you take him not, your blood shall be upon your own heads. Therefore consider whether you will take him or refuse him. This is the question, “ Will you take him or not take him ? ” You that now refuse and slight this offer, the day may come, when you would be glad to have it.

You that are now in the bloom of your youth, and you

that are more ancient, living in health and wealth, you have other things to take up your minds; but the time will come, when the bridegroom shall enter in, and the doors shall be shut, when your hour-glass shall be out, and your time spent, and then what we now offer shall be reckoned glad tidings. But take heed that it be not too late, beware lest you cry and God refuse to hear. Not but that God will hear every man, if his cry come from true and unfeigned faith; but it may be, God will not give it when you are come to that extremity. Seeing you would not come when he called, it may be he will not come when you call. It may be he will not breathe the breath of life, nor give such a spirit and disposition as he will accept of. Christ died to purchase to himself “a peculiar people zealous of good works.” He died for this end, that men might do him service. And if you will not come in, in time of strength and youth, when you are able to do him service; I say (in his ordinary course) he will reject you in your extremity. You may not then expect mercy at his hands. Therefore do not say, I will follow my covetousness and idleness, my pleasures and business, my lusts and humours, and hereafter come in; for you are not to choose your own time. If he call you, and you refuse to come, take heed lest in his wrath he swear that you shall not enter into his rest.

The next point that these words afford us, is this; that faith is that whereby the righteousness of God is made ours to salvation. The righteousness of God (saith the apostle) “is revealed from faith to faith:” that is, it is so revealed and offered by God, that it is made ours by faith; we are made partakers of it by faith. Now for the opening of this point to you, you must understand, that there are two ways or covenants, whereby God offereth salvation to men. One is the covenant of works, and that was that righteousness by which Adam would have been saved if he had stood in his innocency; for it was that way that God appointed for him: *Do this, and live.* But Adam performed not the condition of that covenant, and there-

fore now there is another covenant, that is, the covenant of grace. This is thus expressed, "To him which worketh not, but believeth on him which justifieth the ungodly, his faith is accounted righteousness," Rom. iv. 5; (mark it,) "To him that believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly;" that is, there is a certain righteousness that Christ hath prepared or purchased for men; and though they be ungodly, he requires nothing of them, but only, that they take it.\* Now he that will believe God that he hath prepared this righteousness for him, and will receive it, it is enough to make him a righteous man in God's acceptation; so that this is the only way now by which men shall be saved. The work is already done on Christ's part. There is the righteousness that God hath prepared, which is therefore called, *the righteousness of God*; and there is nothing precedently required on our part, but taking and applying of it.

But, you will say, Is there nothing else required of us? Must God do all, and must we do nothing, but only take that righteousness that is prepared for us? I answer, it is true indeed, we must lead a religious, sober, and righteous life; for, "for this end hath the grace of God appeared." Yet you must remember withal, that we cannot work this holiness in ourselves; that must be God's work.† We are only to take this righteousness, and the other is but a consequence that followeth upon it. To illustrate this unto you by a similitude: a wheel or a bowl runneth, not that it may be made round; that is the business of the workman, who makes it round, that it may run. So it is in this case; God does not look that we should bring holiness with us, for we have it not to

\* Viz. In the sense already explained.

† God works it in us, by giving us his regenerating and sanctifying Spirit, which we must ask of him in earnest, importunate, and persevering prayer, Luke xi. 13, joined with watchfulness, self-denial, and mortification, Rom. viii. 13.

bring. We are at the first only to believe, and accept this righteousness that is offered us. When that is done, it is God's part to frame us, and fashion us for an holy life.

We read, Eph. ii. 10, "We are God's workmanship, fashioned in Christ Jesus, to walk in good works, which he hath ordained." Mark it: It is not an action of our own: God is the workman; we are the materials, as the clay and the wood, that he takes into his hands. When we have but taken this righteousness that is offered, it is God's work to cast us into a new mould; to give us a new heart, and to frame a new spirit within us, that so we may walk in good works before him. This is the great mystery of godliness: and we have much ado to persuade men to believe that the righteousness prepared by Christ should be offered to them, and nothing be required but receiving of it.\* This will not sink into the hearts of men by nature. They think they must do something precedently, or else this righteousness is not offered them. But, my beloved, we must learn to believe, and know, that it is the work of God to sanctify us, after he hath justified us, and not before.†

In many things indeed there is still some precedent actions of our own required, to gain this or that habit or ability; as in the learning of arts and sciences, or to write well, there is some action of our own required for it, and then we get the ability to do it. But then, besides these, there are other habits, that are planted by nature in us; as, an ability to hear, to see, and taste. Now, we need not any action of our own for the attaining of them, because they are planted in us by nature. So it is in these things that belong to salvation. We may indeed get habits of moral virtues, by labour and pains of our own; there

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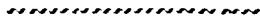
\* See the above notes.

† True; but God says, "I will be inquired of," he sought unto by prayer, "by the house of Israel to do it for them," Ezek. xxxvi. 37

are actions of our own required to them ; and in that the philosopher said right, that “ we learn to be temperate, and sober, and chaste : ” but for the graces of the Spirit, it is not so. Those habits that nature hath planted in us, we exercise them naturally, without doing any action of our own to attain them ; as we do not, by seeing oft, learn to see, but it is a faculty naturally planted in us. So it is in all the works that we must do, which are the way to salvation ; God works them in us, he infuses these habits into us. Therefore this conclusion is good, that it is faith alone, by which this righteousness is made ours to salvation.\*

This is evident by the apostle, Gal. ii. 21, “ If righteousness had been by the works of the law, then Christ had died in vain.” As if he had said, salvation must needs come one of these two ways : either by something that we do ourselves, some actions that we ourselves have wrought ; or else it must come merely by faith. Now if it had been attainable by any work of our own, Christ died in vain : as if he should say, Christ could have given you ability to do those works without his dying ; but for this very cause Christ came into the world, and died, that he might work righteousness, and make satisfaction to God : so that you have nothing to do for the first attaining of it, but to receive it by faith.

And if you would know the reason why God, who might have found out other ways to lead men to salvation, yet hath chosen this way, above all others, (to receive the righteousness of Christ, which he hath wrought for us, only by faith) you shall find these four reasons for it in the Scriptures : two of them are set down Rom. iv. 16,



\* The apostle states this doctrine in a somewhat different light, exhorting us to “ work out our salvation with fear and trembling,” because “ God worketh in us to will and to do of his good pleasure ; ” and assuring us, that they that “ are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts,” Phil. ii. 12, 13, Gal. v. 24.

“Therefore it is by faith, that it might come by grace.” This is one reason why God will have it by faith, “that it might be of grace.” For if any thing had been wrought by us, (as he saith in the beginning of the chapter,) it must have been given as wages, and so it had been received by debt, and not by favour, but this was God’s end in it, to make known the exceeding length and breadth of his love, and how “unsearchable the riches of Christ are.” His end was to have his grace magnified, Now, if there had been any action of ours required, but merely the receiving of it by faith, it had not been merely of grace. For faith empties a man; it takes a man quite off his own bottom. Faith cometh as an empty hand, and receiveth all from God, and gives all to God. Now God would have salvation received by faith only, that it might be acknowledged to be free, and to be altogether of grace.

Secondly, as it is by faith, that it might come by grace, so it is thus also “that it might be sure; that the promise might be sure.” If it had been any other way, it had never been sure. Suppose that God had put us upon the condition of obedience, and had given us grace and ability, as he did to Adam,\* yet the law is strict, and the least failing would have caused death. But now, when the righteousness that saveth us is wrought already by God, and offered to us by him, and offered freely, and that the ground of this offer is the sure Word of God, we may build infallibly upon it.

Thirdly, it is by faith, “that it might be sure to all the seed;” not only to those that are of the law, but also to them which were strangers to the law. If it had been by the law, then salvation had been shut up within the compass of the Jews; for the gentiles were strangers to

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* The covenant of grace made with man since the fall has as truly *conditions or terms*, to be complied with, viz. *Repentance towards God, and faith in Christ*, as the covenant of justice had the condition of *perfect obedience* to be complied with before the fall.

the law of God ; they were unclean men, shut out from the common-wealth of Israel. But when it is now freely propounded in the gospel, and nothing is required but only faith to lay hold upon it,—when there is no more looked for but believing and receiving,—hence it comes to be “sure to all the seed.”

The last reason why it is of faith is, that no man might boast, “that no flesh might rejoice in itself.” For if it had been by any other means, by any thing done in ourselves, we had had cause to rejoice in ourselves. But for this cause, saith the apostle, 1 Cor. i. 30, “Christ is made to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, that he that rejoiceth,” or glorieth, “might rejoice,” or glory, “in the Lord.”

If God had given us a wisdom of our own, we would have had cause to have rejoiced in ourselves ; but as we are mere *darkness*, Ephes. v. 8, and there is nothing but foolishness and weakness in us, and we have wisdom only in him, “no flesh can glory in his presence.” Again, if we had had grace put into ourselves, for which God might have accepted us, the flesh would have boasted ; therefore *his* righteousness is made *ours*. But, when this is done, yet, if after justification it had been in our power to have performed the works of sanctification by any strength of our own, we should yet have been ready to boast thereof. Therefore, “Christ is made sanctification” too ; so that “we are not able to think a good thought,” we are not able to do the least good thing without him : “It is I (saith the Lord,) that do sanctify you.” It is I that do act every grace : it is I that do put your hearts into a good frame. “Christ is made sanctification to us ;” so that take a holy man after he is justified, it is Christ that sanctifieth him, and that carries him through his life in an holy and righteous conversation. And all this is done that “no flesh should rejoice in itself.” And yet one thing more is added by the apostle ; for if a man could rid himself out of misery, if a man could help himself when he is under any cross or

trouble, he would then be ready to boast in himself: therefore, saith he, "Christ is made to us redemption also:" so that take any evil, though it be but a small evil, a small disease, a little trouble, no man is able to help himself; it is Christ that redeems us from the least evils, as well as from hell itself. (For you must know, that all the miseries that befall us in the world are but so many descents and steps towards hell.) Now, all the redemption that we have is from Christ. So that let us look into our lives, and see what evils we have escaped, and see what troubles we have gone through, see what afflictions we have been delivered from, it is all through Christ, who "is made redemption for us." It is true indeed there are some general works of God's providence that all men taste of; but there is no evil that the saints are freed from, but it is purchased by the blood of Christ; and all this God hath done, "that no flesh might rejoice in itself:" and for this cause salvation is propounded to be received only by faith. There is no more required at our hands, but the taking of Christ by faith; and when we have taken him, then he is all this to us.

You now see the reason why it is by faith only that the righteousness of Christ is made ours to salvation. I need add but one thing more; and that is, to shew you what this faith is: for when we speak so much of faith, every man will be inquisitive to know what this faith is. Faith, if we take it in the general, is nothing else but this, "A firm assent given to the things contained in the Holy Scriptures, for the authority of God that spake them."

But if we speak of *justifying* faith, we shall find, that that is not commonly expressed in the word *believing* only, but *believing in Christ*, which is another thing: and therefore you shall find that it differeth in two things from this general faith. First, in regard of the object; and indeed that is the main difference: for whereas the other faith looks upon the whole Book of God, and believes all that God hath revealed, because God hath revealed it; this *justifying* faith pitcheth upon Christ,

and takes him, with all his benefits and privileges. So that the difference lieth not in the habit of faith, but in the object; for with the same faith that we believe other things, we believe this; as with the same hand that a man takes other writings, he takes a pardon; with the same eyes that the Israelites saw other things, they looked upon the brazen serpent. The second difference is a main one too; for whereas the other faith doth no more but believe the truth that is revealed, justifying faith takes Christ, and receives him. There is then an act of the will added to that faith, as it is expressed Heb. xi. 13, "They saw the promises afar off, and embraced them." Others, it may be, see the promises, and believe them, but they do not embrace them. So that justifying faith may be thus described:—

Justifying faith "is a grace or habit infused into the soul by the Holy Ghost, whereby we are enabled to believe, not only that the Messiah is offered to us, but also to receive him as a Lord and Saviour." That is, both to be saved by him, and to obey him; (mark it!) I put them together,—to take him as a Lord and as a Saviour. For you shall find that they are joined together in the ordinary phrase of Scripture, "Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour." Therefore we must take heed of disjoining those that God has joined together: we must take Christ as well for a Lord as a Saviour. Let a man do this, and he may be assured that his faith is a justifying faith. Therefore, mark it diligently, if thou wilt take Christ as a Saviour only, that will not serve thy turn. Christ giveth not himself to any upon that condition, only to save him from hell; but we must take him as a Lord too, to be subject to him, to obey him, and to square our actions according to his will in every thing. You must not only take him as a priest, to intercede for you, but to be your king also. You must suffer him to rule you in all things; you must be content to obey all his commandments. It is not enough to take Christ as a head, only to receive influence and comfort from him; but you must take him

also as a head to be ruled by him, as the members are ruled by the head. You must not take one benefit alone with the members, to receive influence from the head, but you must be content also to be guided by him in all things, else you take him in vain.

That you may more fully understand what this faith is, I will add these four things:—1. I will shew you the object of this faith. 2. The subject or place where it is. 3. The manner how it justifieth us. 4. The actions of it.

First, consider the object of this faith, and that is Christ. And herein this is to be marked, a man must first take Christ himself; and after, the privileges that come by him. And this point I could wish were more prest by our divines, and that our hearers would more mind it. I say, remember that you must first take Christ himself, and then other things that we have by him, as the apostle saith, Rom. viii. 32, “If God hath given us him,” that is, Christ, “he will with him give us all things else.” But first have Christ himself, and then all things with him. Faith doth not leap over Christ, and pitch upon the promises of justification and adoption, but it first takes Christ. The clear understanding of this will help us much in apprehending what justifying faith is. As it is in other things, if you would have light, you must first have the sun; if you would have strength, you must first take meat and drink before you can have that benefit by it; so you must first have Christ himself before you can partake of those benefits by him: and that I take to be the meaning of this, Mark xvi. 15, “Go preach the gospel to every creature under heaven; he that believes and is baptized, shall be saved:” that is, he that will believe that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, and that he is offered to mankind for a Saviour, and will be baptized,—that will give up himself to him,—that will take his mark upon him; (for in that place, by baptizing is meant nothing else but the giving up of a man’s self to Christ, and making a public testimony of it.) Now every

one that will believe and be baptized,—that is, give up himself to Christ,—shall be saved. So that a man must first take Christ himself, and then he may do as the wife after she hath her husband; she may think of all the benefits she hath by him, and may take them and use them as her own.

The second thing that I promised was to shew you the subject of faith, and that is the whole heart of man,—both the mind and the will. First, on the part of the *understanding*, it is required that it believe; that is, conceive and apprehend what God hath revealed in the Scriptures. And here an act of God must come in, putting a light into the understanding. For, my beloved, faith is but an addition of a new light to reason; that whereas reason is purblind, faith comes and gives a new light, and makes us see the things revealed by God, which reason cannot do. By faith we apprehend these great and glorious mysteries, which otherwise we could not apprehend. So then there must be light put into the mind, that a man may be able by that to believe this; to conceive and apprehend the things that are offered in the gospel.

But this is not all; there is an act also of the *will* required, which is to take and receive Christ: for this taking is an act of the will; therefore observe, there must be a *consent* as well as an *assent*. Now it is the act of the understanding to assent to the truth, which is contained in the promises: but that is not all; there is also an act of the will requisite to consent unto them; that is, to embrace them, to take them, and to lay hold upon them, and to apply them to a man's self. Now this also must be wrought by God. As God puts a new light into the understanding, to see and believe these truths; so there is another act which God also works on the will; and unless he work it, it is not done. For come to any man that is in a state of nature, and ask him, "Will you be content to take Christ? That is to say, to receive him in that manner as he hath been described?" His answer

would be, "No." Beloved, the lives of men express it, though they speak not in so many words. Therefore, till God come and draw a man, and change his will, the work is not done. So then we see that *faith is an action both of the mind and the will, wrought by God, enlightening the mind, and changing the will*; which is that which our Saviour Christ calls drawing; "None comes to me unless the Father draw him." That is, unless God change him, and put such a disposition into him, that he can find no rest till he come to Christ.

Thirdly, the next thing we are to shew you is, *how this faith justifieth*.

Now you must know that this faith is considered two ways; either as it works, or as it receives; either as a quality or as an instrument. As a quality, it works; and in this sense it hath nothing to do with justification. It justifieth us as it is an instrument, and that not by altering the nature of sin; that is, by making sin to be no sin; but by taking away the efficacy of sin. As for example, When a man hath committed sins, faith doth not make his sins to be no sins. It cannot be that that sin which is once committed, should be made no sin. We cannot make adultery to be no adultery; for the nature of the thing must remain. Well, now what doth faith? It doth this; though the sin be the same that it was, yet it takes away the guilt of sin, that power of it by which it puts us into the state of condemnation, and by which it binds us over to punishment. As the lions to which Daniel was cast, were the same as they were before, they had the ordinary nature of lions; but at that time God took away that fierceness that was in them, so that they did not devour him; so it is with sin. The nature of sin is to condemn us; but when God shall take away this efficacy from it, it doth not condemn. And this is that which faith doth.

Faith then, by taking away the efficacy and power of sin, justifies as an instrument, as a hand takes the pardon. The king, when he pardoneth a traitor, doth not make his

treason to be no treason, for the act of the treason remains still; but the taking of the pardon makes the traitor to be no longer under condemnation. So, my beloved, faith is that act that takes the pardon from God; so that, though the sin remain the same, and of its own nature is of power to bind us over to death; yet by this faith taking the pardon from God, it comes to pass that it hurts us not, we are not condemned for it. Thus, I say, faith justifies us as an instrument, by accepting, receiving, and taking the acquittance that God hath given to us, through Christ.

Fourthly, Let me add the next thing; which is, what the acts of this faith are; and they are these three: first, to reconcile, or to justify: secondly, to pacify the heart: thirdly, to purify or sanctify. The first thing that faith doth is to reconcile: that is, (as I said before,) by faith we are pitched upon Christ; we take him first, and then we take the privileges that follow thereupon, forgiveness and adoption. Being reconciled to Christ by faith, we have boldness to go to Christ for forgiveness; to go to Christ to make us heirs of all things. For after this manner faith doth it; "All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos." And why? Because you are Christ's. (Mark it,) you must first be Christ's: that is, even as the wife is the husband's, so you must be knit and united to Christ, and then all things are yours. Faith first makes us one with him; and in him, one with God the Father; and then all things are given unto us, and made ours.

The second act of faith is to quiet and pacify the heart; to comfort us, in assuring us that our sins and transgressions are forgiven; and this is different from the former. For you must note, there are two acts of faith; the one *direct*, by which we apprehend and take Christ, and the righteousness that is offered through him, by which we take forgiveness; and the other *reflex*, by which we know that we have taken Christ, and have taken out our pardon: and this act is very different from the former.

The first act of faith, whereby we take Christ, and those privileges by him, is founded upon the sure Word of God; God hath tendered it to us upon his Word and promise. But the second, whereby I know that I have done this, is grounded upon experience. But we are helped by the Holy Ghost to know it, "for the Spirit itself witnesses with our spirit that we are the children of God."

We come now to the uses of this point: *faith is that whereby we are made partakers of the righteousness of Christ.* And first, if it be by faith only, that we are made partakers of that righteousness that saveth us, we should learn to come to Christ with an empty hand, and not to be discouraged for any want that we find in ourselves, for the greatness of our sin. We should not be discouraged for the want of a perfect degree of repentance and godly sorrow, or for the want of whatsoever good work you think is requisite to salvation. For, my beloved, you must know, that this is the nature of faith, that it doth its work best alone. Faith is so far from requiring any thing in the party that shall have Christ, that a man must necessarily let go all things else before he can believe. This is a point necessary to be considered, because every man is apt to think that it is impossible that God should accept him, unless there be something in him for which God should regard him. If he find himself to be exceeding ungodly, he thinks that Christ will never look after him. Again, if he hath nothing at all to give to God; if he hath nothing to bring with him in his hand, he thinks he shall have no pardon. But, you see that faith requires nothing in the first apprehension of Christ: if a man be never so unworthy, it is all one; the offer, notwithstanding, is made to him. Again; why should you look for righteousness in yourselves? The work of faith is to take that righteousness that is none of your own: there is nothing else required. So then there is no reason why any man should be discouraged in his first coming, for any want that he finds in himself, or for any condition that he is in. It is faith only that makes us

partakers of a righteousness to justify us, because we ourselves have it not. I say, faith is so far from requiring any thing to be added to it, to help it in the act of justifying, that of necessity it excludes all things else. For faith hath this double quality; to lay hold on Christ offered, and to empty a man of all things else. As for example :

Faith is not only the believing of a truth which is delivered, from the authority of him that delivers it, but it is a resting upon Christ, a casting ourselves upon him. Now when a man leans upon any other thing, he stands not upon his own bottom; for if he did, he could not properly be said to lean. If a man trust and depend upon another, he provides not for himself; but he that provides so as to make himself safe, if another should fail him, so far trusts himself. So that, if you trust Christ, it is of necessity required that you be unbottomed of yourselves; you must altogether lean upon him; you must cast yourselves wholly upon him.

Faith hath such an attracting virtue in it, that it fills the heart with Christ. Now it cannot fill the heart with Christ, unless the heart be emptied first. Therefore I say, faith hath a double quality; the one to take, the other to empty; and the one cannot be without the other. Hence it is that we say, faith engrafts a man. A man cannot be engrafted into a new stock, unless he be quite cut off from the former root; therefore faith drives a man out of himself, and makes him nothing in himself; so that when he comes to lay hold on the promise of God, he looks at no quality or excellency of his own; he looks at no fitness or worthiness in himself, but he comes with a hand and heart altogether empty. So that when a man comes to beseech God to receive him to mercy, and to grant him a pardon of his sins,—when he comes to take hold on the righteousness of Christ for his justification,—if he think that there is any little worthiness in himself, or that there is no fault in him at all, and from thence shall think that God will receive him; this man is not fit to take Christ; he

must be wholly emptied of himself, and then God will speak peace unto him.

But you will ask, What is that which faith doth empty a man of? I answer, Faith empties a man of two things: 1. Of all opinion of righteousness in himself. 2. Of all opinion of strength and ability to help himself. For if either of these remain in the heart, a man cannot receive Christ. First, I say, a man must be emptied of all opinion of worthiness in himself; of all conceit that he hath the least righteousness in himself. When the young man came to Christ, and Christ told him that he must keep the law, and he said he had done all those things from his youth, Christ knew that he was not yet fit: therefore, saith he, "Go and sell all that thou hast.", Christ's end was nothing else but to discover to him his own unworthiness. If thou wilt be perfect, saith Christ, make this trial. Canst thou be content to let thy wealth go to follow me? Canst thou be content to suffer persecution? He could not. And this shewed that he was not yet perfect; but that he was still a sinful man. This was the way to prepare him for Christ. This course we see Christ always took. We see it expressed in the parable of the publican and pharisee; the publican went away justified, because he was wholly emptied of all opinion of worth in himself: but the pharisee was not justified; not because he was not outwardly a juster man than the publican; but because he had an opinion of his own righteousness; of a worthiness in himself, therefore he went home not justified. That which a man thinks he hath already of his own, he will never be at the cost to buy. Therefore that is the first thing that a man must do; he must think himself of no worth at all, he must be empty of all opinion of his own excellency.

Secondly, but this is not all; although a man be persuaded of this, that he hath no worthiness in himself, yet, if he think he is able to help himself, he will not come to take Christ. And therefore this farther is required, that a man see that he hath no ability to help

himself, that all his redemption must come from Christ. If you ask many men whether they have any opinion of worth in themselves? they will be ready to answer, no. What then is the reason that they come not to Christ? It is because they are in health and prosperity, and imagine they can do it soon enough hereafter. They can for the present subsist without Christ. But when God shews a man's heart to himself; when God shews a man his danger, and how unable he is to help himself out of it; then he will have no rest till he have Christ. Many men complain that they would believe, but they want that sorrow that they should have; that repentance they would have; they think they are not yet fit, therefore they dare not apply the promises. We may complain indeed if we find a want of desire after Christ; for that is required: but if we look upon any thing as a qualification in ourselves, such a worthiness is not required: we must be driven out of all conceit of it, or else we cannot take Christ. Well then, seeing it is only faith whereby we lay hold on Christ's righteousness, we have no reason to be discouraged in respect of any want; nay, we must find a want of all things in ourselves, before we can be made partakers of this righteousness.

A second use of this point is, if it be by faith only we are made partakers of this righteousness, then we should learn to glory only in God, not in ourselves; for this is the very end why God appointed this way of salvation, "For he hath chosen us to the praise of the glory of his grace, in his Beloved," Eph. i. 6. Now if that be God's end, why he will have us saved by faith, let us not disappoint him of his aim; let us not take from him the glory of his grace; but let us glory in the Lord. This point we should especially look to, not to glory in ourselves. Every man is apt to reflect upon himself, and would fain see some worth there, that he might glory in. It was Adam's fault in Paradise; whereas he should have trusted God, and have wholly depended upon him for all.

He would needs know good and evil. He would have something of his own ; and this was it that lost him all, and brought the curse upon him. Now in the gospel, God comes by a second means of saving men ; and in this the Lord would have the creature to have nothing in himself to glory in. But man is hardly brought to this, but exalts and lifts up himself, and would fain have some worth and excellency of his own ; but as long as we act thus we cannot be saved. We have an excellent place to this purpose, Col. iii. 11 ; the apostle saith there, (in the matter of salvation,) “ There is neither Jew nor Gentile, bond nor free, but Christ is all in all ; ” that is, when we come to be justified before God, when we come to the matter of salvation, God looks at nothing in a man, he looks at no difference between man and man. One man is virtuous, another man is wicked ; one man is a Jew, and hath all the privileges of that people ; another man is a Gentile, an alien from the commonwealth of Israel ; one man is circumcised, another man is uncircumcised ; but all this is nothing. Why ? Because “ Christ is all in all. ” You are to observe first, that Christ is all ; that is, there is nothing else required to justify. Indeed, if we were something, and he were not all, we might then look at something besides ; but he is all. And again, he is all in all : that is, go through all things, that you may think will help you to salvation ; in all those things Christ is only to be respected, and nothing but Christ. Whatsoever is done without Christ, God regards it not. If you will do any work of your own to help yourselves in salvation, if you will rest upon any privileges, Christ is not all in all ; but Christ must be all in all in every thing. And if only Christ be all, then we must come only with faith ; for it is faith only that lays hold on Christ.

Now a natural man will not have Christ to be all, but himself will be something. Or if Christ be all in some things, he will not have Christ to be all in every thing. To have Christ to be his wisdom, his righteousness, his

sanctification; to do nothing but by Christ; to have Christ to be his redemption, not to be able to help himself without Christ, but that Christ must help him out of every trouble, and bestow upon him every comfort; this, I say, is contrary to the nature of man. Therefore we must be thoroughly emptied of ourselves in this matter of glorying, as well as in the matter of taking. For in what measure any man sets any price upon himself, so far as he hath any opinion of himself that he is something, just so far he detracts from Christ. But when a man boasts not of himself at all, such a man rejoiceth in God altogether, such a man will stand amazed at the height, and breadth, and length, and depth of the love of God; such a man will be able to see, that there are unsearchable riches in Christ; such a man will be able to say with Paul, that he cares for nothing, he reckons all things dung, Phil. iii. 8. I am a Jew, I am a Pharisee, I have been as strict as any man; yea, I went beyond others; yet I look not after these things, but that I may be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, but that righteousness that God accepteth, which is through faith in him. Therefore, my brethren, learn thus to rejoice in Christ and in God, and not in yourselves. This is the most excellent work that we can perform.

Thirdly, if it be faith only, by which we are made partakers of the righteousness by which we are saved, then it should teach us to let other things go, and principally to mind this; to labour to get faith, whatsoever becomes of other things; for it is that by which we have salvation. It is true, there are many other excellencies that we are capable of, many moral virtues, such as Aristotle and Socrates have described; but, without faith, God regards none of these. Take one that is a wicked man, and take another that lives the most strict and exact life, who yet is not justified by faith, God makes no difference between these men; the one is as near to heaven as the other; God looks upon them both with the same eye; for he regardeth nothing without faith. He

that hath been the most profane and ungodly, if he come with faith, he shall obtain Christ ; the other that hath all moral virtues, without faith, they shall do him no good. Therefore you are to seek for nothing in the matter of justification, but how you may be enabled to believe. If men will employ their strength and their endeavours, and busy themselves to attain such and such virtues, it is but as the watering of the branches, and to let the root alone. Faith is the root ; that is, it is that which makes all acceptable to God. Without this, what is our preaching ? We may gather near as good instructions to resist vice out of Seneca, as out of Paul's epistles ; but this differenceth it, that we preach Christ, and from Christ we derive strength to do all things else ; and that makes all else to be acceptable.

You here see not only the difference between moral virtues, and those in a true Christian, (which is godliness,) that they come from different fountains, and look to different ends ; but you see also the difference between the shews of strictness in worldly men, and that sincerity of life that we preach unto you, which is an effect of faith. For, if you mark it, you shall find that all they do, either is without Christ, or adds to Christ. They think they shall be saved for doing such and such things, which prepare and fit them for salvation. They look mainly to the works done, but still Christ only is not sought after in all this. But now look to the doctrine that we have delivered. It is Christ that we preach : it is faith that we preach unto you. It is true, we preach those things too ; we lay the same necessity upon you of doing good works ; we stir you up to holiness of life, and mortification. But here is the difference ; we say that faith doth all : we derive all from a justifying faith, laying hold upon Christ : and so love to him, and all other graces arise from this.

Now when we are come with boldness, and have laid hold on Christ, then let us look to the privileges ; then let us take the pardon of our sins, and all things else,

only remembering that condition of after-obedience. It is true we may come freely, and though nothing be required, but that we take the Son of God that is offered, yet, there is a condition of after-obedience; we must resolve to serve him, and to love him with all our heart; we must resolve to do that which Ruth promised to Naomi, to live with him, and to be with him, and that his people should be our people, and his God our God. But remember, when God calleth you to come unto Christ, he promiseth that the virtue of Christ's death shall kill sin in you, and that the virtue of Christ's resurrection shall raise you up to newness of life. God hath promised that he will give you the Holy Ghost. Now, "He that hath called you is faithful, and he will do it." So that I say, if you will come in, if you will accept of Christ upon his own conditions, it is certain God will receive you. And if you find yourself troubled with any lust or temptation, press upon God, urge him with his Word and promise, that he would assist you by his own strength, and resolve as Job, "Though he kill me, yet will I trust in him." And he will enable you to overcome.

Now because this laying hold on the promises is a point of much moment, and because it is a thing that is not easily done, therefore I will shew you these two things: 1. That the understanding must be rightly informed in it: and 2. That the will must be drawn to it. First. The understanding must be rightly informed what ground a man hath to do it. When a man is persuaded in a confused manner, without any just ground, this is not right; this keepeth many from assurance, because they are not clearly instructed in it. For, to the end that faith may take hold on the promise, we must conceive of the right method; and that stands in these four things: 1. We must see our own condition, we must be sick before we can seek to the physician; we must see ourselves to be condemned men, and that there is nothing in us to help ourselves; we must see ourselves to be children of wrath, and then we shall come and seek for

a remedy. 2. We must look to the promises of God, which are contained in his Book. Christ is there clearly offered, only with this condition, that we must obey him, and serve him, and love him. Christ is offered in the Scriptures to every one, and if you have him, you shall have a pardon of your sins with him; only he is offered with condition of obedience. Well then, after a man hath consulted the Book of God, he considers in the first place, the generality of the promise, that it is offered to all, and none is excepted; and, in the next place, he concludes, if it be offered to all, it is offered to *me*. But he inquires further; Will Christ do to me as he hath promised? Is he able and willing to do it? When this is well pondered, and we find that we have a sure word to confirm this, then, 3. We must come and take him. And when this is done, when we have taken Christ, and bestowed ourselves upon him, then, 4. We must consider what we shall have by him, and make use of all that Christ brings with him, pardon of sin, and all things else that he hath, we have with him. We are the sons of God, and shall be sanctified, (for together with him we have his Spirit;) all our prayers shall be heard; all the promises in the Book of God are ours. As all the world is his, so it is all the wealth of a Christian after he hath taken Christ.

Secondly. The next thing to be done, is this, to draw the will to take the promises; for, though the understanding rightly apprehend all that is delivered in the Word, yet except we willingly take Christ upon these conditions, the thing is not done. Seeing then the will hath a part in faith, as well as the understanding, and this must be drawn, the question is, who must draw it? This is the work of God; he only hath the sovereignty over the will and affections of man; it is the great prerogative of God. When a business is to be done with the will and affections, God must persuade to it. So saith our Lord, John vi. 44, "No man can come to me except the Father draw him." But how shall that be done? It

is not such a drawing as when a man is drawn by force ; but it is a drawing which is done by changing the will and affections. When God alters the bent of the mind, and affects a man's heart so, that he cannot rest till he hath Christ ; and when he sees his need of him, he will not give over till he be sure that he is reconciled to him. "Draw me, and I will run after thee," saith the desiring soul." Here is meant such a drawing as is called the teaching of God, John vi. 45, "Ye shall be taught of God;" that is, when God comes to teach a thing, he boweth the will and affections to it. Now there are three means by which God doth usually draw the will. And 1. The will is drawn, by being persuaded what the miserable condition of a man is, that is not yet come to Christ, that hath not yet taken him, that hath not got the pardon of his sins, that hath not got assurance that Christ hath received him to mercy. 2. By being persuaded of the good that he shall get by coming to Christ. And, 3. That he shall not lose his labour, if he attempt to come to him.

The first thing, I say, that draws us to Christ, is to consider how miserable we are without him. When a man is persuaded of that, and sees this necessity laid upon him, of coming or perishing, then he will come in. Therefore we say the law drives men to Christ : and the law doth it by shewing a man his sin, and the curse due to it. This draws him to consider that God is his enemy, that all the creatures are his enemies. For if God be thine enemy, then needs must all the creatures be so, because they turn with him to and fro, as an army turns at the beck of the general. Now for a man to consider that he hath God and the creatures to be his enemies, that every thing works together for his hurt ; that prosperity slays him, and adversity is not a medicine, but a poison to him : that the Word, which is the "savour of life" to others, is the "savour of death" to him ; that the sacraments, which are a means to convey grace and assurance to others, are a means to convey satan to his

heart; I say, when a man seriously considers this ; when he seeth what case he is in, and that he cannot live without Christ, this will be one thing that will incline the will to take Christ.

In the second place, we must find some good, some excellency in Christ ; and this is the second thing that draws the will. If we take him, we shall have all his wealth, and all his honour, all the joy and pleasure he can afford. We shall have all his wealth ; that is, go through the whole universe, and see what there is profitable or comfortable to the sons of men, and all that is ours. Is not this a strong argument to move a man to take Christ ? That all the angels in heaven, all the excellent ministers on the earth, (that are next to angels,) are all his servants ? All the world is his, both life and death ; that is, whatsoever belongs to this life or another, all is for his service. When the apostle could say no more, he said, " Things present, or things to come ;" for a man should look to both. As heaven will not content him without the things of this life, so the things of this life will not content him without heaven ; but when there are both, the mind is satisfied. This then may well draw you, when you see how miserable you are without him, and that you shall gain so much by him.

In the third place, if you seek for Christ, you shall find him ; you shall not lose your labour in attempting ; you shall be sure to obtain. It is a great means to encourage you to come unto him, when you see you shall not fail. There is nothing required on your part, as you have heard before, but only an earnest hunger and thirst after him. " He justifies the ungodly." And therefore if any thing hinder, it must be on God's part. Now what is there on God's part that hinders ? He hath promised, and he will not go from his Word. And therefore, when there is no hinderance on either part, why do you not believe ? If you are willing to come, you are sure to receive him ; you shall have remission of all your sins. Consider what Christ did in the days of his flesh ;

how he behaved himself then? Was he not exceeding gentle to all that came to him? Exceeding compassionate and pitiful? Ready to heal every one, ready to do any thing that was requested of him? That he denied not any that was importunate with him? Do you think that he hath put off that disposition? Is he not the same still? As it is in the Hebrew, Is he not a merciful High Priest still? The bowels of compassion in him melt over a straying sinner, and he is ready to receive him. His bowels yearn within him, and therefore doubt not that the Lord will receive you.

When all this is put together; when I see the misery of a man without Christ; when I see I shall be happy with him; when I see it is of necessity; and, if I come, I shall certainly be received, he cannot refuse me; all this will help to persuade me. This you should learn to press upon your own hearts. We that are the ministers of Christ, are bound to press it upon you. He hath sent us out to compel men to come in, that his house may be full. He commands us to go out into the highways, and into the hedges, and compel men to come in; that is, to be very importunate with them, promise them, threaten them, command them in the name of Christ to come in. God would fain have his house filled. "He hath killed his fatlings." He would not have his table ready, and have no guests. He would have his house filled, that his table might not be prepared in vain; and that it may not be in vain, we are to invite you to this marriage; we are to invite you to a banquet. In a banquet there is a concourse of all pleasant things. Such things are in Christ. There is a concourse of all spiritual joy and comfort; of all precious things you can find. And if you will come and take, ye shall have all his jewels, all his graces to adorn you. Let this persuade you to come in.

But some may object, "If I come in, I must lose my right eye, or right hand; I must part with my sins, which are as dear to me as these members." It is true, we

must do so, but then we shall have heaven for our labour. If heaven be not worth the losing of a right eye, or a right hand, keep thine eye still; but if thou dost, thou shalt be sure to go to hell with it. There needs no other answer: do but seriously consider this; if I will I may keep this fleshly desire; but it will certainly lead me to hell. But, it may be further objected, "If I do thus, I must deny myself; and it is a difficult thing for a man to offer violence to himself, to cross himself in all his desires; especially to cross those that are most rooted in the soul, is very difficult." I answer, Christ is worthy of all these; and thou shalt provide better for thyself by doing this. If a man have a disease, that cries hard to him to have such and such things, it is wisdom for him to deny it, because he nourisheth that which would destroy him. A man's self-love is his disease, and to indulge that is his destruction. That which you call yourself, is your disease, and when you feed yourself, you feed your disease; and therefore every one is to be ruled by the physician's advice, who teacheth to do otherwise, even to deny himself daily.

Ye have now heard the first point, that righteousness is revealed and offered in the gospel, to as many as will take it: as also the second; that it is by faith we are made to partake of this righteousness. The third point that we are now to handle is this, that *faith admits degrees, and every Christian ought to grow from degree to degree*. This proposition hath two parts: 1. That there are degrees of faith. 2. That we ought to grow from degree to degree. First. There are three degrees of faith. As there are two acts of faith; one whereby we take Christ, which we call a direct act, whereby we truly lay hold on him, and receive him as our Lord and Saviour; the other whereby we know we have received him, called a reflex act, which is assurance, so both these receive degrees. The first act of faith receives degrees in three respects; the last in one respect.

The first act of faith, by which we take Christ offered

unto us, admits this first degree, in respect of persuasion. There is a great degree of persuasion that Christ is offered, and that he is ours ; and there is a less degree of persuasion also. It is true we find this proposed in the Word, that Christ is given to us ; now, though all real believers are persuaded of the truth of this, yet are not all alike fully persuaded of the truth of it. And this we need not wonder at ; for though it be faith, and though the persuasion be true, and good, and firm, yet, notwithstanding, it may admit of degrees, else any man might object, “ If a man be fully persuaded, what needs he more ? If he be not fully persuaded, it is not faith.” I answer, there are degrees in the very persuasion, though the persuasion be good and true. As for example ; a man may see a thing by a little, glimmering light, but when there come more candles, he may see more clearly, although he saw it certainly before : so we may behold the promises of God, and apply them to ourselves, and yet this may admit more degrees. When there is more light, and more arguments, when the Spirit of adoption speaks more clearly and fully to us, there may be a greater degree of persuasion. And therefore that objection, that either it is not faith, if there be doubting ; or, if it be firm in a man, he needs no more, is not true. There is a full persuasion, mentioned Col. ii. 2, which intimates, that there is a lesser degree of faith than that. As, you know, a ship may be carried with a gentle gale of wind, as well as with a stronger gale, though it go not quite so fast ; so likewise there is a little faith mentioned Matt. xiv. 31, where our Saviour said to Peter, “ Why dost thou doubt ? ” Certainly Peter believed, or else he could not have cast himself upon the water ; and yet there was doubting mingled with his faith.

Secondly. The direct act of faith admits degrees in regard of the difficulty of the things that are to be believed. As for example, Martha and Mary both believed in Christ when he feasted with them ; but when Lazarus was dead, and had been in the grave four days, it put them to

a stand to think how Christ could raise him again to life. Now if they had been able to believe this, there had been a greater degree of faith. That was it that magnified Abraham's faith so, that when he was commanded to go and offer his son, the son in whom God had promised that his seed should be blessed, who was called "the son of the promise," he believed that what God had promised, he was able also to perform, notwithstanding this so great difficulty, and however to mere carnal reason the thing seemed impossible. Here was a great degree of faith, because there was great difficulty.

Thirdly. The direct act of faith admits degrees in regard of the extent of it, when there are more things revealed. Thus "the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith;" that is, the righteousness of Christ was revealed in the time of the law and the prophets; but it was revealed obscurely, and there was a little faith among the Jews to believe it was enough to save them; but in the days of the latter prophets, when the time drew nearer, there were greater revelations, and their faith was greater. So the apostles, when Christ was upon earth, had a degree of faith, but when Christ ascended, then there were more revelations, then they grew *from faith to faith*, because they grew from revelation to revelation; then the Spirit of God was sent into their hearts to reveal all things, and to lead them into all truth.

Lastly. The reflex act of faith that gives assurance, that pacifieth and comforteth the heart, by which we know and are persuaded that we have taken Christ, and that our sins are forgiven, admits likewise of degrees. And here, as the evidences of sanctification are more, so is the assurance; as the apostle saith, "the Spirit witnesseth to our spirits." We have need of the light of the Spirit, to judge of the sincerity of the graces we have; and as we receive more and more of this light, so we grow by degrees from assurance to assurance. Now for the second part of the proposition, that we must

grow from degree to degree : for as faith admits of degrees, so we must labour to grow in all these degrees. First, We must labour to grow to a more full and firm assent to the truth of the gospel promises ; by that means we shall draw nearer to Christ, and receive him in a greater measure. The stronger the assent is that we give to the promises of God, wherein he assures us of the pardon of our sins, wherein Christ is offered freely unto us, the more we take Christ, and so the union is greater between us ; we are linked and knit together, and married, as it were, in a greater degree. Secondly, We must labour to grow in the belief of hard things propounded with slender arguments, as well as of easy things, which is the second thing wherein faith admits degrees ; for this is very profitable. I will give you but these two instances. You know what Moses lost, and what Abraham got : Moses lost Canaan, he lost the honour of carrying in the people, he lost the honour of concluding his work, when he had taken so much pains, and all for want of faith, because he did not believe when he struck the rock. Abraham believed things that were of a high and difficult nature. You see what he got by it : for this cause, saith the Lord, I will do thus and thus, “ because thou hast not spared thine only son.” This is repeated, Rom. iv. “ Abraham, being strong in faith, gave glory to God : ” and therefore you see Abraham is set above all men ; he is called the *father of all the faithful*, because he believed in God in so great a matter. This you shall gain, if you will believe ; it will bring you a great reward, yea, it will not only bring a reward, such as Abraham had, but it will bring increase of the same faith. God will reveal more and more to you, and give you more of his Spirit, as he did to Nathanael : believest thou for *this*, saith Christ ? Thou shalt see greater things than these. Thirdly, With regard to the extent of faith ; we should labour to be filled full of faith, by studying the Word much ; for therein will God reveal this increase. Lastly, Labour to get full assurance ; for the more assurance you

have the more love you shall have. And you shall do the more work, when once you are assured that your "labour shall not be in vain in the Lord;" and likewise be established in well doing. A man will never hold out and be constant, till he come to have assurance that he shall not lose his reward.

I exhort you, therefore, to grow in faith. Content not yourselves with a small measure. Believe fully and assuredly that your sins are forgiven you; believe fully the grace that is given you through Christ; trust perfectly in the grace brought in by Christ. It is our fault that we do it not; and hence it is that our joy is weak, our grace is weak. Trust perfectly, "that your joy may be full," that you may have full communion and fellowship with Christ. The benefit is exceeding great when you trust perfectly, and why will you not? Why should you limit the Holy One of Israel, whose mercy and goodness is as his majesty? If you grow in faith, you shall grow likewise in joy; and that is a thing which we have continual need of; that is of hourly use to comfort and strengthen us, and to make us abound in the works of the Lord; that helps us to go through all variety of conditions; that enables us to abound and to want, to pass "through good report and evil report," to suffer and endure persecution. Now that the more you grow in faith, the more you will grow in joy, you may learn from the apostle, Rom. xv. 13, "The God of peace fill you with all joy by believing." So then, the more we believe, the more joy, the more consolation we have.

Again, The more you grow in faith, the more you shall gain the favour of God, the more you shall win his love. There is nothing in the world doth so much win the favour of God as a great degree of faith. And therefore, (though thou mayest be saved with a less degree, yet) that thou mayest be in a greater degree of favour, seek more faith. Though it may be reckoned but a small matter to have a great degree of God's favour, yet it is the greatest dignity in the world. There is nothing that causeth God to set

so much by us as faith. When Jacob got the name of Israel, when he prevailed with God, certainly it was the greatest blessing that ever he had ; and this he obtained, because he then shewed the greatest faith that ever he did. It was his strong faith that prevailed with God. Therefore, the more faith you have, the more God prizeth you. It is this that wins his love. Again, the more faith you have, the more glory you bring to God. If there be much faith, there will be much fruit. "Herein is my Father glorified, (saith Christ,) that you bring forth much fruit." Faith is the root of all grace. Get much faith then, you will bear much fruit, and bring much glory to God. If a man have but a little faith, though he brings forth some fruit, yet there will be something wanting. But when a man is an eminent believer, when he is conspicuous in faith, when he is as a great light that every man turns his eye to, then he is a tree that brings forth much fruit of righteousness, and herein God is glorified.

THE
BREAST-PLATE
OF
FAITH AND LOVE.

PART II.—*Of Effectual Faith.*

1 THESS. I. 3.

*Remembering your effectual faith.**

IN the verse foregoing, the apostle writes thus, “We give thanks always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers without ceasing.” Here he tells the Thessalonians, that he not only prays for them, but likewise in his prayers gives thanks for them ; and that not only once or twice and no more, or now and then by fits, but he continued to do it, he did it constantly ; “making mention of you in my prayers,” says he, “without ceasing.” Then he names the particulars for which he gave thanks, which were these three : 1. For their *effectual faith* ; 2. For their *diligent love* ; and, 3. For their *patient hope*.

* So it runs in the Old Translation.

And these three graces he setteth forth three ways. First, from the property which distinguisheth the true faith from false faith, the true love from false love, and the true hope from false hope. As if he had said, I give not thanks for every faith, but for such a faith as is *effectual*: (that is the property by which the truth of faith is discerned.) Again, not for every love, but for such a love as is *labourious*: (for so the word signifieth.) Thirdly, not for every hope, but for such a hope as makes you *patient*: (that is the character by which you are to know true hope.) And this is the first way whereby he describeth these graces. Secondly, he describeth them from the object upon which these graces are placed, and that is Jesus Christ our Lord. So that he says thus much: I give thanks for the faith you have in Christ, for the love you have towards him, for the hope you have of what he will do for you: or, I give thanks for that faith, for that love, for that hope, that hath Christ for the object of it. Thirdly, he describeth these graces from the sincerity of them: I give thanks for all these graces that you have in the sight of God, not in the sight of man only; as if he should have said, Many go for believers in God, and for lovers of God, and men judge them so to be; but you are really so in the sight of God, not only in the sight of men; not only in your own apprehension, but in good earnest, in sincerity.

I need not say more for the opening of the words. We will come then to the first thing for which the apostle gives thanks on the Thessalonians' behalf; and that is, *effectual faith*. I will therefore deliver to you this point, that *that faith that saves us, must be effectual*. Having said so much of faith, that it is that which saveth men; and that there is no more required of you, but to take the *gift of righteousness*; that you receive Christ; that you only accept of that justification which God is ready to give every man, be he never so unworthy; lest any man should be deceived, in supposing, that if he have but a naked apprehension, and no more, he shall do well

enough, I have chosen this text, that you may know what kind of faith it is that is required of us, in order to salvation.

Saint Paul, by using the word *effectual* in this place, intimates to us, that there is a faith which is not effectual. We see, throughout the Scriptures, much mention made of a certain faith which men had, which was not a saving faith. We see, "many came and believed 'on our Saviour, but he would not commit himself to them : for he knew what was in their hearts." Here was faith ; nay further, it was such as had some effect too, (for it made them come to him,) and yet, for all this, it was not such a faith as God accepts ; it was not effectual. So there came many that were "invited to the wedding, so that the house was full ;" but yet every man "had not a wedding garment." They had a certain faith which brought them to the house, but they had not the wedding garment ; that is, they had not such a faith as could bring forth in them a conjugal affection, which is the wedding garment. Seeing then there is a faith that is not effectual, we have the more need to look to our own. As a tradesman, when he hears that there are so many counterfeit wares in the world, will be more careful how he chooses ; so we should look the better to our faith, seeing there is so much false faith in the world. Therefore, to open this point, I will, I. shew the cause, why there is so much ineffectual faith. II. What it is for faith to be effectual. III. The reasons why God will accept no other faith ; or, why we cannot be saved, unless we have such a faith.

I. The reasons why the faith of many is ineffectual, you will find to be five. First, the taking of Christ upon misinformation. Secondly, the taking him out of fear. Thirdly, taking him more for love of his benefits than of his person. Fourthly, want of humiliation. Fifthly, because faith is not grounded aright. To speak of these more particularly :

First, the ineffectualness of faith ariseth from our taking Christ upon misinformation, when we know not who it is

that we take. Many do as the young man that came running to Christ ; he came hastily, and made account to be his follower, till Christ let him know what it was to follow him ; that if he would “ be his servant, he must sell all that he had ;” that is, take up his cross, deny himself daily, and part with all, or any thing for his sake : and then he went away sorrowing. Therefore saith Christ, “ Let him that builds a house, set down before what it will cost.” If a man consider not beforehand what Christ looks for at his hands, it will go hard with him. For a man can hardly endure to be scoffed at, to have every man his enemy, to part with all his friends, to live a despised man, to suffer persecution, that the end of one persecution should be the beginning of another, and the end of one suffering the beginning of another. Again, because men consider not beforehand, that they must crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts, when they are urged to this, they revolt ; they cannot bear to have their inward lusts and desires so mortified, to be so strait-laced in every thing. Hence many, in good moods, will embrace religion ; but we soon see an end of it. When Christ came to Jerusalem, how ready were the people to receive him with “ Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord ?” But how soon were they gone again ! So, many young comers are ready to take upon them the profession of Christ ; but when they see that Christ and the world, Christ and pleasures, cannot stand together, then they go back, and their faith proves ineffectual.

A second cause of the ineffectualness of faith is, when men take Christ out of fear. Many there are, that, when God affrights them a little with the terrors of the law, when their consciences are troubled, when they begin to apprehend hell, so long as they are in such a condition, they are willing to take Christ ; but as soon as there is an end of those terrors, there is an end of their religion, so that their faith proves ineffectual. Pharoah, when he was in the present strait, would do any thing ; so many men, while they are under great crosses, afflictions, and dis-

graces in the world, will be religious ; but let them have peace and prosperity again, and they will forget God. When a man comes to apprehend death, what will he not do for salvation at such a time ? A merchant, though he loves his goods never so well, yet when the ship is ready to sink, will cast them out ; he is willing to lose them, rather than to lose his life. So when a man comes to stand in the gate of destruction, when he sees heaven and hell before him, he is very ready to do any thing then, not because he loves Christ, but to save himself. He is then very forward to make promises ; but as they proceed from fear, they are not lasting.

Thirdly, when men take Christ, not out of love to his person, but out of love to those advantages they shall have by him, this makes faith ineffectual. Men do in this case, as those that marry for wealth ; if they miss of the money, they care for their wives no longer. So when men look at nothing but heaven, disjoined from Christ ; or, when they look for great matters by Christ in this world, and find it quite otherwise, then they are ready to slip from Christ again. These men seek mercy, not grace. If they can be but assured that it will go well with them, this is all they look for ; but as for grace to be enabled to obey Christ in all things, to repair the image of God in their hearts, they desire it not. They inquire not, what excellency, and what beauty there is in Christ ; what he is, that they should love him ; but, what good shall they get by him ? Whereas, those that take Christ in good earnest, look upon the excellencies of Christ, as he is considered in himself. Not that the other is excluded ; for we may look at the advantages that we have by him, but not upon them alone.

Fourthly, faith proves ineffectual for want of preparation, and humiliation that should go before it. Moses saith, “ The Lord your God will circumcise your hearts, and then you shall love him with all your soul, and with all your strength, Deut. xxx. 6. As if he had said, it is impossible you should cleave to God, and love him with

all your hearts, except first your hearts be circumcised ; therefore “ the Lord your God will circumcise your hearts ; ” that is, he will humble you, he will break your hearts, he will take away those sinful desires, that abounded in your hearts before ; and when that is done, then you shall love the Lord in good earnest. Now, if a man come to take Christ before he be thus circumcised, he takes him in vain, he takes him so, as that he cannot hold him. When men come to Christ, before the law hath been a sufficient schoolmaster to them, they care not for him ; they take him negligently, and therefore they hold him not. Before Christ came into the world, he would have way made before him. So, before he will come into a man’s heart, the mountains must be brought down, the spirit of Elias must make way ; that is, there must be a sharp ministry to shew men their sins, that they may be thoroughly humbled and prepared, or else they will never take Christ so as to keep close to him. Till a man be soundly humbled, he never accounts sin to be the greatest evil ; and till he do that, he never accounts Christ to be the greatest good ; and if a man do not reckon Christ to be the chief good of all, there will be somewhat which will be esteemed before him ; and when that comes, he lets go Christ. But when there is a sound humiliation, which makes a man prize Christ above all things, then faith proves effectual ; a man goes through with the work ; he cleaves so to Christ, that he will not part with him. But for want of this, because way is not made, because the mountains are not brought down, because the ministry is not sharp enough to prepare them, hence it is that their faith is vain, and comes to nothing.

Fifthly and lastly, the faith of men often proves ineffectual, because it is not well grounded ; they take to themselves a persuasion of the remission of their sins upon an uncertain foundation ; they are not built upon the rock : they take Christ, but they are not well bottomed. For there is a certain false persuasion, which is nothing else but a strong fancy, which makes a man think his

sins are forgiven ; but when it comes to examination, he can give no sound reason for it. When men take Christ in this manner, and persuade themselves that their sins are remitted, this persuasion having no good ground, continues not. A false persuasion drove them to Christ, and a contrary wind will drive them from him again.

II. Having thus shewn the causes of the ineffectualness of faith, I am next to declare unto you, what it is that maketh faith effectual. And here we will shew you three things : 1. In what sense it is called effectual faith. For the very opening of this Word, which the apostle useth, will open a window to us, to see into the nature of the thing itself. 2. We will shew you particularly and distinctly, wherein this effectualness of faith consists. 3. We will shew you how this faith is made effectual in us.

1. For the opening of the word *effectual*, in order to shew the nature of effectual faith : you must note, that a thing is said to be effectual, in four respects : first, we say a thing is effectual, when it doth its office, when it exerciseth its proper function ; and when it doth not that, then we say it is ineffectual. In this sense, faith is said to be effectual, when it doth the thing that God expects of it, and that is, to take Christ. If faith then take Christ, it is effectual. But to shew you a little further, what this proper function of faith is : it is, when a man is so far persuaded of the truth of the promises, that he is willing to take Christ ; and though there be some doubtings, yet, if faith come so far as to pitch on Christ, to choose him, to take him, it is effectual. Now, if you would know what it is to pitch on Christ, and to take him, though there be some doubt, or some fear, you shall know it by this : if a man have so taken him, that he is still growing, his faith is still prevailing, still overcoming those doubts and fears from day to day, though it be not perfect, yet it is saving and effectual faith. It is so far from being true, that faith must needs be without all doubting at first, that we may boldly say, generally it is not faith, except it have doubting, unless there be some

fears, unless there be some troubles within, that strive against it. For certainly, there is no man that ordinarily hath perfect faith at the first, so as to set his heart fully at peace. Where there is all peace, where there is no questioning, where the heart is not perplexed and troubled, it is a sign the strong man possesseth the house wholly. Therefore mark this point to your comfort, that if there be but so much faith as will produce this work of taking Christ, though there be some doubtings mingled with it, yet it is properly effectual faith. Secondly, a thing is said to be effectual, as it is opposed to that which is vain and empty; to that which is but a shadow of it, not the thing indeed. So faith is said to be effectual, when it is true, real, and substantial; when it is opposed to a vain faith, or a mere groundless imagination. Thirdly, a thing is said to be effectual, when it is active. If a pilot in a ship, sit still and do nothing there, we may say, he is an ineffectual pilot. So when faith does not shew itself in the fruits of it, this is ineffectual faith; whereas faith should be in the soul as the soul is in the body, still stirring and shewing itself by motion. Faith then is said to be effectual, when it is lively, fruitful, and active in the soul of man. Last of all, a thing is said to be effectual, when it goes through with the work that it hath in hand; so that faith is said to be effectual, that goes through with the work it undertakes; that sanctifieth the heart throughout in respect of parts, and in regard of time; such a faith as overcomes sin, and perfects the work of our salvation; in these four senses faith is said to be effectual. And this is the first thing.

2. The second thing which we undertook, was to shew you wherein the effectualness of faith consists. And that is, 1. In having the preparation sound and full that makes way for it. 2. In having the understanding clear; that is, when a man believeth the promises upon sure grounds, and seeth them distinctly. 3. In a right taking of Christ. 4. In that it turns not only the will but all the affections; and shoots itself into life and practice. But to be more particular :

First, faith is effectual when there is a good way made for it ; when there is sound humiliation going before it, such as makes a man fit for the kingdom of God. When a man is not thoroughly humbled to know what sin is, and what the wrath of God is, he is not fit for the kingdom of God ; but if he come to Christ, if he begin to believe, he will go back again. This is that which is required. “ If there be any worthy, let your peace come upon them.” That is, if there be any, when you come to preach the gospel, that are so far broken and humbled, so far convinced of their sins, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, that they prize me so, that they will not let me go for any thing, such a man is worthy of me, and your peace shall come upon him. It shall come effectually upon him, abide with him, and save his soul for ever. So, I say, this preparation is the first thing wherein effectual faith consists. Not that it is the very same thing as believing ; but yet it is that, without which faith can never be sound and effectual.

Secondly, when there is such a preparation made, yet if a man’s understanding see not the truth of the promise so clearly that he can build on it, his faith will not be effectual. Therefore when he hath the first ground right, the next thing that a man must do, is to believe the Scriptures, to know that they are the sure Word of God. After that, he must consider the promises, and examine them, and being fully convinced of the truth of them, must appropriate them to himself, so as to be able to say, “ I find the Scriptures true ; I find these promises in the Scriptures ; I believe them ; I find Christ offered to every creature under heaven ; I find that even I have a warrant to take him ; I find that he is mine, and I am his.” And when men thus believe ; when they know Christ to be theirs ; then may they be truly said to be built, to be grounded in faith. This is that which St. John saith, 1 John i. 19, “ We know that we are of God ;” that is, it is not a thing that we are uncertainly persuaded of ; but we know it as certainly as any man knows a thing that is

before his eyes. And when the understanding of a man is thus clear and built upon the Word ; this is the second thing wherein the effectualness of faith consists.

Thirdly, the third thing wherein the efficacy of faith consists, is, when we rightly take Christ ; that is, when the will takes him out of love ; not out of fear, not for advantage only, nor out of mistake ; when we take him in such a manner as that we are knit and united to him, as the soul of Jonathan was to David, and are content to leave father and mother, and all that is dear in this world, and to become one spirit with him. Now, I say, when you so take Christ, that you bring him into your hearts, as it is expressed Eph. iii. 17, " That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith : " that is, when there is such an union made between Christ and us through faith, that he comes into our hearts and lives there, and we are so united to him, that we live in him ; then it is an effectual faith.

Fourthly, there is a further act to make faith effectual, and that is the turning of the whole soul, and shooting of it forth in our whole lives and practice ; the doing of the things that Christ commands. " In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith that worketh by love," Gal. v. 6. As if the apostle had said, Many will be ready to believe in Christ, but will do nothing for him, they will not work. Now working is in doing, or in suffering. For in suffering there is a work as well as in doing, only it is a work of more difficulty. Or, if they will do any thing for Christ, it is not out of love, but for other respects : perhaps out of some flash or good mood. To work out of love, is the property of effectual faith. When faith hath once taken Christ, it must shoot itself into all the affections ; and when they are all set on work, endeavour will follow. If the will be set on work, the rest will follow after it. Love will follow, desire after Christ will follow, fear to offend him will follow, repentance and turning from satan will follow, bringing forth good fruits and obedience will

follow. Therefore it is that you find the promises made so promiscuously, sometimes to one thing, sometimes to another: sometimes, he that repenteth shall be saved. Sometimes, he that believeth shall be saved. Sometimes, he that obeyeth shall be saved. Because, when faith is effectual, it hath all these with it.

The third and last thing I proposed was, to shew how faith is made effectual in us. It is made effectual by the Spirit of God. We are not able to believe of ourselves, nay, we are so far from it, that we strive against it; so that, if God himself put not his hand to the work, no man can believe. You may think, when you see such general propositions as these, that "whosoever believeth shall be saved;" it is easy to bring this home in particular, and to say, "This pardon belongs to me." My brethren, it is easy to say so, but another thing for a man indeed to believe it. For a man to take Christ so, as to deny himself; to take him so, as to mortify his lusts; so, as to take up his cross; so, as to obey Christ, to follow him in all things, is more than any one can do, unless God enable him with his almighty power. For the heart of every man by nature, is so shut up against Christ, that it will give no entrance to him. He may stand and knock long enough, unless God himself break off the bolts. Unless he burst open these "everlasting doors, that the King of glory may come in," we will not admit him, but keep him out. Every man naturally hath an hard heart, that cannot repent, that cannot turn from sin. He will be content perhaps to take him for a Saviour; but to take him so as to obey him, to fear him, to love him; this no man will do, or can do, unless the Holy Ghost enable him.

But you will ask, "How doth the Holy Ghost do it?" I answer, by these three acts: 1. By applying the law to a man's conscience. 2. By shewing the excellency and riches of Christ. And, 3. By bearing testimony to our spirits that these riches are ours. 1. The Holy Ghost puts an efficacy into the law, and makes it powerful to work on the heart, to make a man poor in spirit, that so he

may be fit to receive the gospel. For the law, though it be fit to humble a man, yet it is no worker of sanctification. If a man were able to do any thing, he were able to see the righteousness the law requires, and how far he is from it, and to discern the curse upon not doing of it, and yet this he is not able to do without the spirit of bondage. The spirit of bondage must make the law effectual, as well as the spirit of adoption doth the gospel. That is, except the Lord himself press the law on our hearts, so as to cause it to make sin appear to us, we, that are the ministers of God, may discover your sins, we may shew you the rectitude required in the law, we may shew you your danger, yet all will be to no purpose. If God sharpen sin, and cause it to use its sting, this makes a man fit to receive Christ: otherwise, if the 'sons of thunder should speak to men, if we should come in the spirit and power of Elijah, nay, if God himself should thunder from heaven, all would not move the heart of a man, all would not awaken him to see his sins. We may as well shake the earth, as strike the heart of a sinner without the work of God: for, though the law be a sword, yet unless God take that sword into his hand, and strike therewith himself, it will not be able to wound a sinner. Therefore the first work of the Holy Ghost is to awaken a sinner, to set sin upon him, that he may be fit to receive Christ. And when the heart is thus prepared by the Spirit, then the Holy Ghost shews us what we have by Christ: he shews the unsearchable riches of Christ, "what is the hope of our calling, and the glorious inheritance prepared for the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power in them that believe," Eph. i. 19.

You will say, perhaps, a man may see these things without the help of the Spirit. It is true in some manner he may; but not in such a manner as shall affect him. You may read the Scriptures a thousand times over, you may understand them, yet you shall not be affected with them, till the Holy Ghost shews them unto you. This is

the secret of God ; he only revealeth these spiritual things prepared for us in Christ, in such a manner as that we shall love and embrace them. God not only shews us the advantages we have by Christ, but the excellency of Christ, so as to make us in love with his person, as well as be ready to receive the privileges with him. " We have received the Spirit of God," says the apostle, " by which we know the things that are given us of God ;" they are revealed to us by the Spirit," 1 Cor. ii. 12. As if he had said, If you saw them no more than other men do, you would be no more affected with them, than they are : but when you have the Spirit of God to shew you the things that are given you of God, that is the thing that works upon you. Therefore the Lord taketh that as peculiar to himself : " I will write my law in your hearts : " that is, I will make you affected with the things that I shall shew you ; and this is the teaching of God. Now when the heart is prepared by the law, and when these things are so shewed unto us, that we prize them, and long after them, there must be a third thing ; that is, to take them to ourselves, to believe that they are ours ; and there needeth a work of the Spirit for this too. For, though the promises are never so clear, yet, having nothing but the promises, you will never be able to apply them to yourselves. But when the Holy Ghost shall say, " Christ is thine, and these things belong to thee," when the Spirit shall bear witness with thy spirit, by an immediate work of his own, that God is thy Father, then thou shalt believe. This is necessarily required, and without this we shall not believe.

Now the Holy Ghost bears testimony to our spirits two ways. 1. By clearing of the promises, and shining into our hearts, with such a light as makes us able to discern and to believe them. 2. By an immediate voice, by which he speaketh immediately to our spirits ; so that we can say, as they said, John xvi. 29, " Now thou speakest plainly, and speakest no parable ;" we understand thee fully. Till the Holy Ghost speaks to us, we are in a

cloud ; God is hid from us, we cannot see him clearly ; but when we have this Spirit of adoption, to give us this witness, then we believe plainly indeed. Therefore in Isa. lvii. 19, the Lord saith, “ I create the fruit of the lips ; peace, peace, to him that is far off, and to him that is near : ” that is, the minister may speak peace to you, but unless I add a power of mine own to his word ; that is, such an almighty power as I used in the creation, it shall never bring peace to you. I create the fruit of the lips ; that is, the words of the minister to be peace, otherwise they would be ineffectual. Therefore, I say, there must be a work of the Spirit to persuade a man in such a case. Let a minister come to them that are in despair ; they will not apprehend the promises, though he use never such clear reasons, though he argue with them never so strongly, till God himself open the clouds, and send his Spirit into the heart, to give a secret witness to them ; till there be a work of God’s Spirit joining with the promises, we find by experience, our labour is lost in proposing them. It is true, we ought to do this, and every man is bound to look to the Word, because “ faith cometh by hearing ; ” and to hearken to the ministry, for it is God’s ordinance to breed faith in the heart ; but yet till there be a work of the Spirit, a man shall never be so persuaded as to have any sure comfort. Christ may be offered, yet when a man comes to apply him to himself, he is no more able to do it than a dead man to stir himself. Therefore the same power that raised Christ from the dead, is required to work faith in our hearts : it is as great a work to move a man’s heart to Christ, as to put life into a dead man. We are naturally as unapt and backward to take Christ, as a dead man is to receive life. So that when we preach, except there be a secret voice of the Spirit of Christ speaking to your hearts, as we do to your ears, and saying, “ Come and take Christ, ” no man will come.

III. You have now been shewn what effectual faith is ; wherein the efficacy of it consists ; and how it is wrought. Now lastly, we are to shew you the reason why God

accepts no faith but that which is effectual. The reasons may be these four: 1. Because if it be not effectual, it is not faith at all; and if it be not faith, it is no wonder that he doth not accept of it. I say, it is no more faith than a dead man is a man. It hath only the name and shadow of faith, and therefore God accepts it not. 2. If faith be not effectual, there will be no love, and therefore God cannot accept it. For he will save none unless they love him; for that condition is every where put in. "All things shall work together for good to them that love him." And he hath "prepared a crown for them that love him." 3. If faith be not effectual, it will not purify the heart, and enable men to deny all worldly lusts, "and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world;" and therefore God will not accept of it; for unless this be done, the end of Christ's coming into the world will be frustrated. For, for this cause was he manifested, "that he might destroy the works of the devil;" and "for this end hath the grace of God appeared, that men should deny ungodliness and worldly lusts:" and for this end he gave himself, "to purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." He comes to be a king, as well as a Saviour, to rule among his people, to have men obey him. 4. Lastly, if faith be not effectual, it will not be operative and productive of good works. Now, good works are required of necessity, as the way to salvation. "We are God's workmanship, created in Jesus Christ unto good works, which he hath ordained, that we should walk in them," Eph. ii. 10. God judgeth us according to our works, Rom. ii. 6; and at the last day, the reward will be pronounced according to that which men have done. Therefore, God will accept of no faith, but that which is active and fruitful.

We come now to make some use of what hath been said:—first, if it be only an effectual faith which God accepteth, then this justifieth our doctrine against the Papists, that say, we teach that only faith justifieth, and require no good works. I say, we teach, that not a

naked, but an effectual faith doth it. We both agree in this, that works are necessarily required to salvation; "that no man shall see God without pureness of heart," and integrity of life. We say, "Except men mortify the deeds of the body by the Spirit, they shall die." But then here is the difference: They say that faith and works both are required to justify: we say, that nothing is required but faith; but we say, moreover, that it must be an effectual faith, a faith productive of good works.

If it be objected, "that works and love are to faith as the soul is to the body,—("for as the body without the soul is dead, so faith without works is dead;) therefore faith justifieth not, but works,"—I answer, You take the comparison amiss; for the scope of it is this,—As a soul-less body is dead, and nothing worth, so is a workless faith. The meaning is not, that works are as the soul, and faith as the body; but as a man, when he looks upon a carcass and seeth no life in it, no pulse, no motion, no sense, knows such a body is nothing worth; so when we see a faith without motion, that hath no pulse, that hath no expression of life in it, we know such a faith is of no worth. However, though good works be not required for justification, yet this may be a motive to perform them; God rewards us and afflicts us according to them. He is the Father "that judgeth every one according to his works," 1 Pet. i. 17; that is, if our works be good, he is ready to reward us; and if we persevere in well-doing, the greater is our reward; but if we fail, he is ready to chastise us. And not only this, but we require good works of necessity, as well as the Papists. We say, you must have good works, or else you cannot be finally saved; for except you have repented, except you have love as well as faith, Christ is not in you; "and know ye not that Christ Jesus is in you, except ye be reprobates?" 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

The second use that we should make of what has been said, is this: If nothing be accepted but that faith which is effectual, we should learn hence, that if we will grow

in obedience, we must grow in faith ; for all efficacy must come from faith. Therefore, when you find any coldness, any weakness, any languishing, get an increase of faith, and all other graces will grow. If you find you cannot pray, that your knees are feeble, and you cannot run the ways of God's commandments,—as when the branches are weak and withering we use to dung the root ; so labour to strengthen your faith, and that will enable you to do all things. This will be of much use to us in many cases. When a sin is committed, we should labour to recover ourselves out of that relapse. But which is the way ? By labouring to get assurance of the forgiveness of it. Go to God to strengthen thy faith, and that is the way to get out of sin. So if there be a strong lust that thou art to grapple with, and canst not get the victory over, the way is to get an increase of faith, an increase of assurance. For the more faith is increased, the more love there is ; the more the heart is inclined to God, the more ability there is to strive against the corruption that is in you. And again, if a man find he wants patience, thankfulness, or any other grace, the way is not to read moral writers, and seek instructions from them, but to go and strengthen his faith, and that will enable him to do wonders, far above all that the most accurate moralist can teach him to do. To do otherwise is but to water the branches, and let the root alone.

The business of us ministers should be, to lay this main foundation, and build up our hearers in this, and the rest will follow. Paul, that great master-builder, in all his epistles, lays down the foundation of faith, and after that he deduceth particulars, and buildeth on it. And your main business is to consider, whether you have faith. And when you have that, then strive against particular vices, and adorn yourselves with particular graces. For want of this foundation it is that we ordinarily find, that when men resolve to give up and guard against all sin, their resolution holds perhaps only for a day or two ; it comes to nothing, because they go to work without faith.

Therefore, when you have these purposes, take the right course; labour to believe the promises, to be assured that you are translated from death to life, and then your purposes will hold; and till then they are in vain.

In the third place, if nothing please God but what comes from effectual faith, then we should learn to judge aright of our works. There be many works that have a fair shew in the view of men, and perhaps in your own opinion; but if there be not faith in those works, God regards them not. When Abraham did that great work in offering his son, (the greatest work that is recorded in the Book of God,) yet, saith the apostle there, "Do ye not observe how faith wrought with his works?" That is to say, if faith had not set him on work to do this—if faith had not been the spring to set this wheel going, God would not have accepted this. So, do whatsoever you will, further than faith works with you in all that you do, God regards it not. Take the most excellent works that can be performed, God sets them at no higher a price than he finds faith in them: he weighs them by that. Therefore, when you go about any thing, labour to see that faith set you to work. Now, to do a thing in faith is to do it out of persuasion of God's love to us, merely for his sake whom we have chosen, to whom we give ourselves. "He is one," says the believer, "that I know loves me; and therefore, though there were no reward for it, I would serve him." This is a work of faith; and this is properly godliness. For what is godliness, but that which is done to God? but such things and such qualities as have an eye and respect to him? Consider how it is with yourselves, if a man should do any thing for you; yet, if you be persuaded this comes not out of love, nor of true respect to you, whatsoever it be, you regard it not. If it be but a small thing, if it be done out of love, you respect it. So it is with God; works that come from faith and love, (for those I reckon to be all one,) those he respects wonderfully. Every natural man thinks that

alms-deeds, and doing good to the poor, are good works ; but they are not absolutely so. We may do the greatest works of this nature, and yet they may have no excellency in them at all ; and that because they are not done in faith. Again, they exclude common actions of life, as if they were not good works ; whereas even the ordinary works of our calling, our ordinary services from day to day, if they come from faith, if they be done as to the Lord, he accepts them, and they are good works indeed. We should therefore learn to judge aright of our works, to help us against the common opinion of men.

Again, fourthly, if faith be such a thing that no works are accepted without it, that no branch will grow except it come from this root,—you should learn to judge aright whether your faith be a right faith, or not. And that you may know by this : Observe, where there is a true faith, there is a secret persuasion wrought in the heart, whereby God assures you that he is yours, and you are his ; as you have it Rev. ii. 17, “To him that overcometh will I give that hidden manna, and a white stone, with a new name written in it, that he only knows that receives it.” Now would you know whether you have true faith ? Inquire, Have you ever had any of that hidden *manna* ? Have you had a secret persuasion of God’s love to you, which hath been as sweet as manna to you ; which you have fed on, as the Israelites fed on manna ; which gives you life, as manna gave life to them ? Only this is a hidden manna, it lies not abroad ; others see it not, but your hearts secretly feed on it. Again : hath God given you the white stone with a new name written in it ? that is, the stone of absolution ? (as the manner was among the Athenians, to give the sentence of absolution by white stones, as the sentence of condemnation by black stones.) Hath he ever opened the clouds ? Hath he ever shewed himself to you, and “made your hearts glad with the light of his countenance in his Beloved ? Have you ever found this work in yourself, that, after trouble and dis-

quiet within, upon a sight of your sins, God hath spoken peace to you; that he hath said to your soul, "I am thy salvation?"—then rest assured you have a **right** faith.

Observe here, God's general method of dealing with sinners. He sends a wind that rends the rocks, and brings down the mountains, so much as makes the way plain, before he can come in the *soft* voice. There must go always a work of humiliation before the testimony of the Spirit. But mistake not here; as if turbulent sorrow and violent disquiet of mind must always go before peace; for it is not absolutely required that there should much trouble go before. For although it be true, that God never speaks peace but when some trouble, some convincing of the Spirit hath gone before; yet the promise is made to the coming to Christ, and not to the preparation thereto. If a man get to his journey's end, it is no matter how he came thither. If a man find that he is in Christ, and hath a testimony of sonship from his Spirit, though he have not had such a work of humiliation as perhaps he expected, yet let him not doubt of the soundness of his faith. If the mountains are broken down, (after what manner so ever it was,) that is enough. For if there come a soft voice after, whatsoever preparations were before, (which are divers, for God works sometimes after one manner, and sometimes after another,) you have then reason to joy in the God of your salvation, inasmuch as true faith is wrought in your heart.

But, now, what is this *soft* voice? This I shall endeavour to explain. And I take it to consist in two things: 1. One thing is, when there is a clearing of the promise. When we open the promises, if God do not join with us, and clear them to you, by kindling a light within, you will not be able to build upon these promises. For though it be true the Word is near you, and the promises are even in *your mouths*, yet, except God shew them, as clear as they are, you cannot see them. When Jesus stood by Mary Magdalen, he was near enough, but, till her eyes were opened, she saw him not.

So, when we preach these promises, when we lay them open as near as may be, yet it must be the work of the Spirit to let you see them so as to rest on them. Therefore it is one part of this *soft* voice to open the gospel unto you. 2. The other is the immediate testimony of the Spirit, spoken of Rom. viii. 16, "The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit," when God comes, and by a secret testimony of the Spirit, worketh a persuasion in the heart that he is a Father, that he is a Friend that is reconciled to us. But, you will say, this may be a delusion. Therefore, I say, you must have both these parts together: they are never disjoined. God never gives the witness of his Spirit, he never works such an immediate testimony, but it hath always the testimony of the Word going with it. Consider, then, whether ever God hath spoken this to you; whether ever he hath wrought this work in you. For faith, you know, is wrought in this manner: the Spirit comes, and shews Christ to you; and not only shews you his merits, not only tells you that he will be your Saviour, but shews you the beauty and excellency of Christ; it shews you what grace is, and makes you love it, and then it shews you mercy. To this word he adds a second. Christ comes and discovers himself to a man, and saith to him, I am willing to accept of thee. When this is done on the Holy Ghost's part, and we on our part resolve to take him, this is faith indeed. When this work is done, a man may truly say, "This day is salvation come to me." Now I am sure that all my sins are forgiven; now faith is wrought in my heart!

This is one means to try your faith; but because this may be an ambiguous means, I will shew you several effects of saving faith, that so, by taking a view of these, you may judge of the soundness and truth of your own. First, if faith be true, it purifies the heart. Hath thy faith then so brought Christ into thy heart, that he lives in thee, as he did in Paul; that thou canst say truly, I am "dead to sin, and alive to righteousness?" that thou hast "mortified the deeds of the body by the Spirit?"

that thou findest another life working in thee ? For except thou find this,—if thou find not such a life in thyself ; if thou find thy heart not purified ; if there be not a thorough reformation of heart and life ; conclude that thy faith is not good : it is a delusion, and not faith. If the whole bent of thy mind is turned from the world, and set upon Christ, this is faith indeed. But know that faith in Christ and covetousness cannot stand together. When thy mind goeth a whoring after thy wealth, what hast thou to do with Christ ? For, to take Christ is to turn the mind from all things else to seek him. Again, if thou wilt have praise with men, thou canst not believe ; it is impossible. And so, dost thou think to follow any pleasure or lust, to satisfy thy flesh, and to have Christ too ? No, thou canst not ; it is another kind of taking. Thou must turn in good earnest ; turn to God upon sound grounds. Therefore now let us come to the examination of this. Men think that faith is nothing but a persuasion that their sins are forgiven. And thence it is that they are apt to be deceived in it. If we took faith, as it is in truth, to be a marrying of ourselves to Christ, with all our hearts and affections, when he hath given himself to us, as in marriage, and we are given to him,—in so doing we should never be deceived. Now, if thou wouldst know whether thy faith be right, examine it as thou wouldst another thing. If you find wine flat and dead when you drink it, if it warms you not at the heart, if it revives not your spirits, you will say, it is naught ; if it were good wine it would do this. If in the spring you come to look on a plant, and find no fruit nor leaves thereon, you say, This plant is dead. So I say, If thou find not in faith this effect upon thy heart, that it works a general change in thee, and fires not thy soul with love to Christ and his ways,—know that thou art deceived ; rest not in thy present faith ; cast it away, and get a right faith, such as will not deceive thee. Thus much for the right sign of effectual faith.

Secondly, if thou wouldst know whether thy faith be

true, or not, consider whether thou hast the spirit of prayer. For wheresoever there is a spirit of faith, there is also a spirit of prayer. Faith, we know, is wrought in us by the Spirit of adoption. Now the Spirit of adoption is the Spirit that tells us that we are sons. And whensoever the Spirit tells a man he is a son, it teacheth him to pray; and therefore those words were added whereby we cry, "Abba, Father." That is, if thou have the Spirit, it will make thee able to do two things. 1. It will make thee cry; thy prayers which thou makest shall be earnest and fervent; whereas they were cold before. And 2, not only so, but thou shalt speak to him as to a Father; that is, thou shalt go to God, and look upon him as one doth upon a father; upon one whose love he is sure of, of whose favour he doubts not. It may be thou hast prayed to God before, but not as to a Father. It is the work of the Spirit to enable thee to do this; and this it does whenever it gives the testimony of sonship. But perhaps you will say, "Every body can pray." My brethren, be not deceived: the prayer I mean is not a work of the memory, or of the wit. A man that hath a good wit, a ready invention, or a voluble tongue, may make an excellent prayer in his own esteem, and in the esteem of others, but this is not truly to pray. True prayer is the work of God's Spirit. There is one prayer which is the voice of our own spirit: there is a second prayer, which is the voice of God's Spirit in us: that is, when the heart comes to speak as it is quickened, as it is actuated and moved by God's Spirit. Now, God "knows the voice of his own Spirit; for that maketh request according to his will." But the prayers which are made by the voice of our own spirit he knows not; that is, he hearkens not to them. Consider then whether thy prayer be such, or whether, as it ought, it be the voice of God's Spirit in thee. But thou wilt say, How should I know that? Thou shalt know it thus: Dost thou come to him as to a Father? A man prays to God, it may be, all his life, but he comes to him as a stranger. Now,

canst thou come to God as to a friend? as to a father; as to one whose favour thou art assured of? If thou canst do this, then it is the voice of God's Spirit in thee, then he regardeth thy prayers. If not, be sure it is no true prayer; and if there be no true prayer, there is no faith.

Thirdly, if thou hast faith, thou hast peace: for faith pacifies the heart as well as purifies it; as the apostle saith, Rom. v. 1, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." Hast thou then that peace that passeth all understanding? You know, if a man were an hundred pounds in debt, and ready to be cast into prison, and saw not how to escape, and one should promise to pay the debt and deliver him; if he believè this friend, he is full of peace; so, if thou believe thy pardon to be good, there will be peace. But thou wilt say, "Many a man hath peace who hath no faith." True: but I would ask, Is it a peace that comes after war? Hast thou knowledge of that enmity between God and thee? Hast thou had the sense of it; and after this, hast thou been reconciled again? Is it an unutterable calm that followed after a storm? If so, it is a true peace. But, as I said before, if thou hast been always easy, certainly this is a false peace. When a man is at peace, not because he hath escaped the danger, but because he never saw it, his peace is blind; it is not true peace. Again, consider whether it be such a peace as cast out Satan; and whether thou findest him assaulting thy peace again. For, be thou assured, if Satan be cast out, he will not let thee alone; thou shalt be sure to have thy peace assaulted; he will make many rebellions against thee by the flesh and the world. And therefore, if thou find all quiet, if there be no such assaults in thee, be thou assured it is counterfeit peace. But still remember this, that if there be faith, there will be peace; that is, the heart will be at rest, it will be quiet in God.

Lastly, the concomitants of faith are love, joy, and

humility. If therefore thy faith be good, it will always have love joined with it. Therefore, if thou wouldst know whether thou hast taken Christ indeed, consider whether thou lovest him, or not. Perhaps thou wilt say, "O yes, I love Christ; I hope there is no question of that." Every man saith he loves him, but where shall one find one that loves him indeed? Consider, dost thou love him in good earnest? If so, thou needest not go far to make the trial of it: thou mayst find it in thine heart. For love is the most sensible, the most active affection of all others. If thou love the Lord Jesus, thou feelest thy affections stirring in thee towards him, thy heart longing after him. Thou hatest sin, as being that which he hateth. Thou lovest the saints, those that are like God, that are of such a disposition as he is of. Thou art willing to part with any thing for Christ's sake, thy wealth, thy credit, thy liberty, thy all. Therefore, consider if faith hath begotten such a love in thee; then thou canst truly say, "Though thou hast not seen him, yet thou lovest him."

The second concomitant of faith is joy: so 1 Pet. i. 8, "In whom you have believed: whom though you have not seen him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory;" the apostle plainly intimating, that where there is faith there is joy. And it must needs be so; as, you know, he that had the pearl "went away rejoicing;" and, "the kingdom of God consisteth in joy, and peace, and righteousness." Therefore, consider and examine thine own case. Hast thou this rejoicing in Christ? this rejoicing in the forgiveness of sins? If we should examine men's faith by this, we should find that there is but little in the world. Examine yourselves then, you that now hear me; it may be it hath been tedious unto you; it may be, justification and forgiveness of sins are things you take no great pains for; you do not prize them much; but, if you were forgiven indeed, you would prefer it before all other joy; it would comfort you above any thing. A man that hath known the bitterness of sin,

and hath afterwards come to the assurance of forgiveness, (that is) to have faith indeed, will rejoice in it above all things else. All worldly joy will be nothing to it.

But here you must be very wary, for there is a false joy. And therefore, if you would know whether the joy which you have be good or not, consider whether it hold out in tribulation. The apostle says, Rom. v. 3, "Not only so, but we rejoice also in tribulation:" as if he should say, where there is a false faith, there may be much rejoicing for a while; but we rejoice in tribulations; yea, we not only rejoice in tribulations, but our joy is increased by them; they are as fuel, they add to our joy: as in Acts v. "The disciples went away rejoicing, because they were accounted worthy to suffer for Christ."

The last concomitant of faith is humility. If thy faith be right, it will make thee vile in thine own eyes. For what is true faith, but that which brings Christ into the heart, that which causeth him to come and dwell with thee? Now, wheresoever Christ comes to dwell, he shews the creature his vileness, he makes him see what creature he is; whereas another that vainly professeth he hath much assurance, his heart is lifted up. You know, when God drew near to Job, then he saw what a sort of person he was, which he saw not before, "and abhorred himself in dust and ashes."

To conclude, if that be the virtue of faith to be effectual, then, if you have faith, use it. This you are able to do. For though God work in you all the work of faith, yet he doth not work *in* you only, but *by* you. He makes you instruments; not dead, but living instruments, to move of yourselves. It is true, that before you have faith, you can do nothing. Before a man hath life, he is not able to stir; but when he hath life, then he is able to move and stir; so likewise, when he hath faith. When the lamp is once lighted, you may feed it with oil; and if you put more oil to it, you shall have the greater flame. The difficulty is to light it, and that is God's work. He

humility. If therefore thy faith be good, it will always have love joined with it. Therefore, if thou wouldst know whether thou hast taken Christ indeed, consider whether thou lovest him, or not. Perhaps thou wilt say, "O yes, I love Christ; I hope there is no question of that." Every man saith he loves him, but where shall one find one that loves him indeed? Consider, dost thou love him in good earnest? If so, thou needest not go far to make the trial of it: thou mayst find it in thine heart. For love is the most sensible, the most active affection of all others. If thou love the Lord Jesus, thou feelest thy affections stirring in thee towards him, thy heart longing after him. Thou hatest sin, as being that which he hateth. Thou lovest the saints, those that are like God, that are of such a disposition as he is of. Thou art willing to part with any thing for Christ's sake, thy wealth, thy credit, thy liberty, thy all. Therefore, consider if faith hath begotten such a love in thee; then thou canst truly say, "Though thou hast not seen him, yet thou lovest him."

The second concomitant of faith is joy: so 1 Pet. i. 8, "In whom you have believed: whom though you have not seen him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory;" the apostle plainly intimating, that where there is faith there is joy. And it must needs be so; as, you know, he that had the pearl "went away rejoicing;" and, "the kingdom of God consisteth in joy, and peace, and righteousness." Therefore, consider and examine thine own case. Hast thou this rejoicing in Christ? this rejoicing in the forgiveness of sins? If we should examine men's faith by this, we should find that there is but little in the world. Examine yourselves then, you that now hear me; it may be it hath been tedious unto you; it may be, justification and forgiveness of sins are things you take no great pains for; you do not prize them much; but, if you were forgiven indeed, you would prefer it before all other joy; it would comfort you above any thing. A man that hath known the bitterness of sin,

and hath afterwards come to the assurance of forgiveness, (that is) to have faith indeed, will rejoice in it above all things else. All worldly joy will be nothing to it.

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kindles the first fire, he works faith in the heart. But now, when you have it, learn to use it. Do you think a necessity lies upon us to use other talents, and not the talent of faith? According to Scripture, God rewards not men according to the habits they have only, but according to their works. Therefore, think not that you shall be rewarded according to your habits of faith only; for God rewards us according to the use of our faith, according to the works it brings forth, according to the efficacy of it. Set yourselves to work then, and your reward shall be accordingly.

Again, many have faith, and use it not; but if you use it not, you shall have little enough of it: the using of it strengthens it. It is God's usual manner, when he gives faith to a man, to give him exercise to keep his faith breathing. If a man have an estate, what is he better, if he use it not? What is a man the better for a friend, if he do not use him? Faith makes a man a friend to God; and will you make no use of God? Will you have God in vain? Shall he be your God, and will you not use his power, his wisdom, his ability to hold you up, to help you upon all occasions? You should make use of him; and then all that is his is yours, if you make use of it by faith. Again, if faith be used, it is able to do much for us; if it lie still, it will do nothing. Look, how much you use your faith, so much you shall be able to do. Therefore Christ saith, "Be it according to thy faith:" that is, not according to the habit of thy faith, that lies dead, as a talent wrapped up there; but, be it according to the use of thy faith. If you set faith on work, it will be able to do wonders; to overcome the world; to work righteousness; to prevail with God and men; it will be able to go through the greatest matters.

Then use your faith in comforting yourself, for that is one use of it. You should set it to work to fill your heart with joy, out of the assurance of the forgiveness of sin, and of the privileges which you have by Christ. Again, if a man would set his faith to work, he would be able

to use the world as if he used it not; he would not care for losses and crosses, he would not grieve for them. He might walk with God in the upper region, above the storms. There is much variety of weather here below; now it is fair, and then it is foul; if a man were above these, there would be a continual serenity. So it is with a man that hath his heart in heaven; he soars aloft as the eagle, and cares no more for things below, than the eagle cares for the chirping of sparrows. If I have God, what is the loss of a friend, of any creature? If a man suffer wrong in his name, what is it, if he have *praise of God*? Believe, see God in his greatness,—have praise of him, and that will make you condemn the rest. What is poverty, to one that hath treasure in heaven, to one that seeth he hath all God's treasures opened to him. If a man would set his faith at work in good earnest, he would "be afraid of no evil tidings;" he would say within himself, If there be no ill tidings from heaven, it is no matter what comes on earth: his heart would be filled with joy, and he would go "through ill report and good report, through want and through abundance," without being troubled with either; the one would not puff him up, nor the other deject him.

Further, set faith on work to sanctify you, to mortify your lusts, to revive and strengthen you in the inward man, and to make it quick in every good work. Faith is exceeding effectual to do this. Set faith on work to believe the forgiveness of your sins, to believe the love of God towards you. This shall turn your heart to God; for there is no way to mortify lusts, and to quicken your heart, but to delight in God. The more thou believest that God is thine, the more victory thou shalt get over thy sins. If thou look on God merely as a Judge, it will turn thee away from him; but if thou look upon him as upon one that loves thee, this will win thine heart to him, and turn it from sin; and thou shalt find sin die and wither in thee, and thy heart to grow in grace. Whatsoever sin seems to be weakened by other means, it only

lieth hid : but when thou once lovest God, if Christ should come to thee and say, “If thou love me, disdain such a thing which I hate ; ‘keep my commandments ;’ let not thy conversation be in wantonness, ‘in strife and envying ;’ labour to glorify my name, and to do good to mankind ; be diligent in thy calling ;” thou wouldst gladly obey. So then, when thou wouldst have thy sanctification, increase thy faith. The more thou believest, the more the Spirit of Christ is conveyed into thy soul. The stronger thy faith is, the more the sap shall flow from Christ : the more largely he will send his Spirit into thy heart, that makes thee joy in him, and causeth thee to die to sin, and live to righteousness.

THE
BREAST-PLATE
OF
FAITH AND LOVE.

PART III.—*Of Love.*

GAL. V. 6.

For in Jesus Christ, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love.

IN the fourth verse of this chapter, the apostle affirms, that there is no justification by the law. For, saith he, “If you are justified by the law, you are fallen from grace:” that is, you cannot be partakers of that justification which is by grace. Because to have it by the law, and to have it by grace, are opposite. To confirm this, he gives a reason in this verse: for, saith he, “In Christ Jesus,” (that is, to make a man acceptable to God through Christ Jesus,) “neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision:” neither the keeping of any part of the ceremonial law, or the omission of it, nor the keeping of the moral law, or the breaking of it, will help to

ingraft a man into Christ, or to make him acceptable to God through Christ. Nothing will do it, but only faith; and that not an empty, idle faith; but, as he addeth further, such a faith as works by love. So that you have two parts in this text: 1. A negation of that which doth not make us acceptable to God through Christ; it is not our being circumcised or uncircumcised, or any thing of that nature. 2. An affirmation of what it is that makes us sons of God; it is only faith and love; such a faith as is accompanied with love and good works; so that you see, he removes all works of ours; all works, not only of the ceremonial, but also of the moral law, considered as the means of justification, because they are opposite to faith; they exclude faith, and faith excludes them, so that they are as well to be shut out, as the works of the ceremonial law. None of these, saith the apostle, will do it. For you must know the way to salvation is contrary to that of damnation. Look how you lost the kingdom of God, so you must get it. As it was not our particular breaches of the moral law that lost it; but the fall of the first Adam: so we must go in again into paradise by the same way that we went out; that is, by being made partakers of the righteousness of the second Adam. Our righteousness is not the way that the Lord hath appointed mankind to be saved by; but the receiving of Jesus Christ and his righteousness. But you must remember that you must take him so as to love him. And it must be such a love as is fruitful in good works; not an empty, idle love, that is, a love in shew only, but it must be a love in deed and in truth.

In the handling these words, I will consider first, what it is that puts us into the happy state of life and salvation; and that is, *faith that works by love*. Hence it is clear, that faith and love are the two pillars, upon which our salvation is built. Of faith we have treated at large before; it remains now to speak of love; and here we will deliver this point to you, that, whosoever loves

not the Lord Jesus, is not in Christ, and by consequence, is in a condemned and damnable estate. Now, because this is necessarily required, that you have faith and love, or else you are not in Christ, and cannot be acceptable to God through Christ; so our business will be to open unto you what this grace of love is.

Love is nothing else but a disposition of the will, whereby it cleaves to some good thing agreeable to itself. And this disposition shews itself by two effects: 1. It creates, in the man that has it, a desire to have the thing it loves preserved. 2. Of having it his own; and therefore it causes him to draw near to it, or else to draw the thing near to himself. This is the nature of love. But this further you must note, that there are divers kinds of love. 1. There is a love of *complacency*, when a man is well pleased with a thing; when there is some agreeableness between the thing loved and the frame of the soul. So the master loves his scholar that is every way towardly. So the father loves his son, as one in whom he is well pleased. 2. There is a love of *friendship*, that goes beyond this love of complacency, when a man both loves and is loved again. So a man loves his friend, and is loved again by his friend. Lastly. There is a love of *dependence*, when one loves a person upon whom all his good depends. Now, we are said to love the Lord with the love of complacency, because he is a full adequate object to the soul. We love him with a love of friendship, because there is a mutual love; he loves us, and we love him; as the spouse saith, "My Beloved is mine, and I am his." Again, we love him with a love of dependence, for we rely upon him for all our happiness and comfort. Now this love, wherewith we love any object that is suitable to us, hath degrees; and that love is stronger, as the object of that love is more adequate and full; as it is more free from mixture of evil: and as it is more high and supernatural; as we depend upon it more, so we love it more. All these you shall find in God. Now, lay down these general principles, and we will

make use of them afterwards. Only, before I pass on, observe,

There is a natural love that God hath placed in the heart of every man, wherewith every man loves himself, his children, his wealth, or any thing by nature that is good to him. And this natural love hath two other loves hanging on it. The one is a sinful love, that carries it the wrong way to love sinful things. The other is a spiritual love, which sets banks, as it were, to the stream of natural affection ; and not so only, but elevates natural love, and makes it an holy love. So that all natural love is to be subordinate to this, being given us to help us to go that way that spiritual love should carry us, even as the wind helps the ship, whereas otherwise it should have been driven with oars. And therefore the Lord, to help us to love those things that are suitable and convenient to us, hath in mercy put a natural affection into our hearts, which yet is to be guided by spiritual love.

As love comes from similitude and agreableness, and consequently where there are two of a contrary disposition, there must needs be hatred ; so every man naturally hates God, by reason of that opposition and contrariety which is between the nature of the one and the other. Therefore, that love may be wrought in the heart of man towards God, this sinful nature of ours must be broken in pieces, and again be new moulded and framed. The love of God then is wrought in us by these two things : First, By breaking our nature in picces, as it were ; that is, by humiliation, and by the law. And Secondly, By moulding it anew, which is done by faith, and by the gospel. When a man's heart is broken, he is willing to take Christ as a Lord, as a Husband ; and when Christ hath discovered his will to take him, and the man hereupon resolves to take Christ, then there ariseth a holy, a constant, conjugal love, wherein they are rooted and grounded. This is the love we are now to speak of. So that to prepare us to love Christ, we must come to look on him, as upon that which is suitable and agreeable to

us. And again, as one that is willing to receive us : and this must be marked as diligently. Therefore we will give you this definition of spiritual love out of that which hath been said, "It is an holy disposition of the heart, rising from faith, whereby we cleave to the Lord, with a purpose of heart to serve him, and to please him in all things."

This love is so necessary to salvation, that he that hath it not is in a cursed and damnable condition ; he is not in Christ, if he do not love him ; as our Lord saith, "He that believes not shall be damned," so we may say of love ; for there is a tie between all these, faith, repentance, and love. And therefore we find these words put promiscuously. Sometimes, he that believes not shall not be saved ; sometimes he that repents not shall not be saved ; sometimes he that obeys not, sometimes he that loves not, shall not be saved : and therefore the Scripture is clear in it, and there is good reason for it. First, You know there is a curse belongs to him that breaks the law. Now when a man loves not, he breaks the whole law. For as love is the keeping of the whole law, so the want of love is the breach of it. So though a man may do many things, though he may keep the sabbath, deal justly, hear the word, yet, because it is not out of love, he breaks the whole law. And therefore he that loves not is in a cursed and damnable condition. Again, you know, in the law of God, an adulterer ought to die. Now he that loves not the Lord is an adulterer, that is, he is false to the Lord that should be his husband. And when he loves not the Lord, he doth love somewhat else. And doth it not deserve a curse to prefer self before the Lord ? That a man should "love pleasures more than God ?" That he should "love the praise of men, more than the praise of God ?" And this is the case of every man that loves not the Lord, he loves the world : and he that loves the world is an adulterer, saith St. James.

But if it be of such moment to love the Lord, then let every man look to himself, and consider whether he

have in his heart this love to the Lord Jesus. For whatsoever you do, though you pray never so constantly, though you sanctify the sabbath never so diligently, do what you will, yet if you love him not, he regards it not. Indeed, when a man doth love him, the Lord bears with much; but when you love him not, perform never so much, he rejects all. And therefore learn by this to know yourselves, and to judge of your condition. It may be, when we confess our sins, we have no thought of this, that we love not Christ, or at the least, we have not considered what a sin it is not to love him; but you may know the sin by the punishment of it: "Let him be accursed that loves not the Lord Jesus," 1 Cor. xvi. 22. Let these words be sounding in your ears, compare your hearts to them. Sometimes cast your eye on the one, and sometimes on the other, and see if it be not absolutely required to love the Lord. And again, reflect on your hearts, and see if you be in the number of those that do love him.

But take heed herein that you deceive not yourselves, for it is the manner of men, when we press the love of Christ upon them, to say, "I hope I love the Lord; I hope I am not such a miscreant as not to love him." Yea, but consider whether you do or not. When a man loves his wife, his friend, his son, his sport, he knows he loves it; he hath the sense of that love in himself. Therefore consider with yourself, whether you have any such stirring affection towards the Lord Jesus, or not. Do you feel your heart so possessed with him? Are you sick of love, as the spouse saith in the Canticles; that is, are you grieved when he is absent? Are you glad when you can get into his presence? For there is a kind of painfulness in love: and all painfulness is of a quick sense. Therefore, if you love the Lord, when there is a distance between him and you, when he doth not look on you as he was wont, there will be painfulness and grief in it; as well as much joy and gladness when you have him. Therefore let this be one way to examine

your love to Christ, see whether you feel joy for his presence, and grief for his absence.

Again; as it is an argument that a man loves not the Lord, if he walks not with him, doth not converse with him; so it is that a person loves him, if he walks and converses with him day by day. Now, to walk with the Lord every hour, is to consider what the Lord doth to you, what his carriage is to you, what passages of his providence concern you; and, on the other hand, how you act towards him, what intercourse you have with him. I say, this conversing is an argument of love. Shall a wife profess love to her husband, and never come where he is, and never be in his company? So, will you say, you love Christ, and not be frequent in prayer, seldom converse with him, seldom speak of him? When you love your friend, you are with him as much as you can, you love to speak with him, and of him. So it is with the Lord, if you love him, certainly you will love his company, you will love his presence.

Yet further, love is diligent. When a man loves any thing, he is diligent to obtain it; he spares no labour, no cost, he cares not what pains he takes so he obtain it. Do you thus take pains to draw near to God, to get grace, to excel in it? Are you willing to put yourself to inconvenience, to deny yourself in your ease, to take time from other businesses, and to bestow it this way? Are you content to put yourself to a harder task, to forbear things that are pleasant, to take pains for the Lord? If you love God, it will make you diligent to obtain him. Again, love is a quality that is well pleased with itself; as we say, *love desires no wages*, it is wages enough to itself, it hath sweetness enough in itself, desires no addition. And therefore if you love the Lord, you shall know it by this; you serve him, and serve him with all your might, with all your strength, though he should give you no wages. The very enjoying of the Lord, the having communion with him, the having the assurance of his favour, so that you can say, "My Beloved is mine,

and I am my Beloved's," is wages sufficient to a man that loves. Such a man, though there were not heaven to follow, though there were not a present reward, nor a future, yet he would love the Lord; and loving him, he would delight to serve him; and enough to him would be the Lord's favour. As Christ saith, "it would be his meat and drink to do his heavenly Father's will." But, besides all this, if you love the Lord, your love will constrain you to please him, to obey him in all things, to do what he requires. You cannot choose but do it; as the apostle saith, 2 Cor. v. "The love of Christ constrains us." It makes a man do it, whether he will or not. It is like fire in his breast, he cares for no shame; it makes him go through thick and thin. It is true, I may lose my reputation; you may reckon me a madman; some men do think me so; but that is nothing to me. I must do it, the love of Christ constrains me. So that where love is, it is such a strong impulse in the heart, that it carries one on to serve and please the Lord in all things, as a man is carried in a strong stream. Therefore, when you find in yourself joy for the presence, and grief for the absence of the Lord Jesus; an earnest desire to be continually in company with him, from day to day; when you are exceeding diligent to get an assurance of his favour, and to excel in that grace, without which you know you cannot please him; when you are well-pleased with what he doth, and think it enough that you have the Lord himself, though you should have no other wages; and when you find a strong impulse in your heart, that carries you on to serve the Lord; then you love him. And if you love the Lord, you are in Christ.

Now, we must beseech you to examine yourselves by these rules, and if you feel you want this love of Christ, we will lay down some motives to beget it in you. If we were able to present him to you as he is, we should effect this thing; but that must be the work of the Holy Ghost; notwithstanding we will briefly open to you such reasons as we find used in the Scriptures.

And first, let this move you to love him, that he is worthy to be loved. Now what is it that makes any thing worthy of love, but the excellency that we find therein. Now in the Lord there is all kind of excellency. Whatsoever is amiable under the sun, all that you shall find in him more abundantly. If ever you see any thing excellent in any creature, any thing amiable in man, any beauty, any virtue, any excellency, all these must be more abundant in him that made these creatures. And therefore, if you have any love, (as there is no man without some love or other,) to any creature that seems beautiful to you, think with yourselves there is more beauty in the Lord. If ever you see in any man any nobleness, any holiness, any excellency of parts or disposition, know that it is more abundantly in the Lord Jesus. Let these rivers lead you to that ocean, to that abundance of excellency that is in the Lord. And if you love any creature, let it be with a little love. Let your affection be proportionable to the object. As all excellency exceeds in the Lord, so let your love exceed towards him. "Love him with all your soul, and all your strength." He hath that in an infinite degree, that is only sprinkled among the creatures. Every creature hath some imperfection in it: there is somewhat in it that may cause aversion; there is no man but hath some weakness, no creature but hath some want, some defect in it; but in the Lord there is no want, there is nothing in him but that which is perfectly amiable.

Secondly, Consider the easiness of the condition required of you after all that he hath done for you. It is no more than to love him. If he had put you on a harder task, you ought to have done it. If he had said to us, you shall offer your children to me in sacrifice, you shall give your own bodies to be burned, who could have said any thing against this? For he is the Lord, the great God; our sovereign Creator: but when the Lord asks no more at our hands but to love him, will you deny

him? Moses urged this motive to the Israelites when he had described to them what the Lord had done for them; "And now," saith he, "what doth the Lord require of thee" for all this, "but that thou love the Lord thy God?" As if he should say, the Lord might have asked much more at thy hands; if he had, thou hadst no reason to deny it: but all that he requires is that thou love him: and wilt thou deny this unto him?

Thirdly, Consider who it is that hath planted this love in thy heart: is it not the Lord that gives thee this very affection? And when he calls for his love again at thy hand, doth he call for more than his own? Shall he not gather the grapes of his own vineyard? And shall he not eat the fruit of his own orchard? He hath planted in us these affections, and they ought to be returned to him.

Fourthly, Consider you are engaged to love the Lord, and that should be a great motive to you: "You are witnesses that you have chosen the Lord this day to serve him," said Joshua to the people, Josh. xxiv. 22. As if he should have said to them, you are not now to choose, you are now engaged. You cannot go back, you have professed, you have chosen the Lord to serve him, therefore you are witnesses against yourselves. So I may say to every man that hears me, you are engaged to love the Lord. Why? Because you are baptized in his name, you have taken him for your Master, and for your Father, therefore he may challenge it at your hands. "If I be a Father, where is my honour? If I be a Master, where is my fear," Mal. i. 6. He may challenge it justly, for you are his; he hath bought you, yea, he hath overbought you; he hath paid a price of more worth than us all. He hath bought us with his blood. And what hath he bought us for, but to be his; that is, to love him? Therefore, when we love him not, we rob God of ourselves, we do an unnatural thing; it is treachery and injustice in us. Every one of us that loves not the Lord,

sins the more, because he is engaged to him, Deut. xxxii. 13, "Thou forsookest the strong God of thy salvation;" thou forsakest him to whom thou art engaged: he is the strong God of thy salvation. Therefore consider this; for seeing you have such an affection as love is, you must bestow it somewhere. Somewhat you must love. And you must know again, it is the best thing you have to bestow, for it commands all in you; and where will you bestow it? Can you find any creature upon whom to bestow it rather than the Lord? Will you bestow it upon any man? The Lord exceeds them; as David saith, "Who among the gods is like thee?" That is, take the most excellent among men, that are reckoned as gods, yet who among them is like unto thee? Or what will you bestow your love upon? Your wealth, or your pleasures? You must think the Lord will take this exceeding ill at your hands, that you should bestow this affection elsewhere, than on him, to whom you are engaged.

Fifthly, An especial motive for a man to love the Lord, is to consider what the Lord hath done for him in particular. Remember what passages have been between the Lord and you, from the beginning of your youth. Recount the particular kindnesses and mercies you have received from him. It is he that doth all for us; it is he that feeds us; that clothes us: we have not a night's sleep, but he gives it to us; we have not a blessing, but it is from his hand; there is not a judgment that we escape, but it is through his providence. The consideration then of these particulars should be as so many sparks to breed in us a flame of love towards the Lord. Think then, how unreasonable a thing it is, that you should forget this God, that you should not think on him, that you should not love him, that hath done thus much for you.

Lastly, Consider that the Lord loves you; for that is the greatest motive to win us to love him; for as fire begets fire, so love begets love. This was the cause that

St. Paul loved the Lord, "He loved me, and gave himself for me," saith he, Gal. ii. 20. Consider this love of the Lord, and let this beget in you a reciprocal affection towards him. Put all together, and consider the Lord is worthy to be beloved; that he requires nothing but love of you for all that he hath done for you; that God hath planted love in your hearts, and therefore doth but call for his own; that he hath done you so many kindnesses, that you are so engaged to him, that you are not now to choose; and let these things move you to love him. At least, as he is worthy to be beloved, bring your hearts to this, to desire to love him.

You will say, "We may desire long enough, but how shall we be able to do it?" First, You must pray for it. Come to the Lord and tell him, that you desire to love him; that you would fain do it if you could, and beseech him not to deny you that request, that you know is according to his will. And be assured that the Lord will not refuse you, especially if you beg it importunately at his hands. If you ask, how prayer enables us to love God? I answer, partly by obtaining at God's hands a power so to do; for when you cry earnestly for it, he cannot deny you. When the lame and the blind were importunate, he never neglected any, but healed them; so when you cry to the Lord and say, I would fain love thee, but I cannot; will he not be as willing to heal your soul, to give you legs to run after him, and eyes to see him, as he was to heal the lame and the blind? Certainly he will. But besides that, prayer brings us to converse and to have communion with God, and by that means love to him is begotten and increased; as you know when you converse with men it is a means to get love to them. Again, the Lord delights to shew himself to a man that is much in prayer, yea, at such a time, for the most part; as he shewed himself to Christ when he was praying; as he did to Moses, to Cornelius, and others. And again, prayer exerciseth this love, it blows up a spark, and makes it a flame. Therefore much prayer

begets much love. If you would be abundant in love, be fervent and frequent in prayer.

You will say, "Prayer is a general means for other things; why do you put it as a particular means to get love?" The reason is, because love in an especial manner is a gift of the Spirit, a fruit of the Holy Ghost; and it must be a peculiar work of the Spirit to beget it. It is true, "faith comes by hearing," and hearing begets faith; which is done likewise by the Spirit. But love is more peculiarly than other graces the gift of the Holy Ghost. None are able to love Jesus, but he in whom the Holy Ghost hath planted this affection. Therefore the way to get it is earnestly to pray, to acknowledge the power of the Holy Ghost, to go to him, and say, Lord, I am not able to do it. This acknowledgment of the power of the Holy Ghost is the way to prevail.

Another special means to enable you to love the Lord, is to consider your sinfulness, what you are, what hearts you have, and what lives you have led, and how gracious God hath been to you. You know Mary Magdalene loved much, because she had much forgiven her; that is, she had a deep sense of her sins; the Lord had opened her eyes to see what she had been. And because she saw her own vileness, and thereby the goodness of the Lord, who had forgiven her, *she loved much*. For when we are humbled, and little in our own eyes, and the Lord comes and shews mercy on us; when a man sees his sin, and thinks with himself, "I am worthy to be destroyed, I can expect nothing but death;" and the Lord comes suddenly, and tells him, "You shall live," and shall reconcile himself to him; this will command love. So when we consider how we have behaved ourselves to him, and yet that he hath offered us peace, and saith, "Return, and I will forgive you;" this should work on the hardest heart. Therefore consider your sins. But remember it is not enough to say, "I am a sinner;" but come to particular sins, as Paul did: "I was a blasphemer," says he, "I was a persecutor, and yet the Lord had mercy on me,"

So be you likewise ready to say, I have committed such and such sins, it may be uncleanness, it may be sabbath-breaking and swearing, and yet the Lord hath been merciful, or is willing to receive me to mercy. "If a man's wife play the harlot, will he return to her?" No, he will put her away, and give her a bill of divorcement: but when the Lord saith, "But you have done it," and done it oft, and "with many lovers," and "yet return again to me," and I will receive you to mercy; this should melt our hearts, and cause us to love the Lord.

I proceed now to shew you what properties of love we find in the Holy Scriptures. You shall find this to be one property of love, it will be content with nothing but love for love. If one love another, let the beloved do never so much, let him be never so kind in his actions, never so bountiful, yet except the lover have love again, he is not content. Indeed when we do not love a man, we can be content though his heart go another way, so that we enjoy profit by him; but it is the nature of true love to desire to be paid in its own coin. Now if you love the Lord Jesus, if you might have all the blessings that he could bestow upon you: if he should open his hand wide, and compass you about with abundance, yet, without an assurance of his love, you would not be content therewith, your heart would not be at rest.

Again, if you love the Lord Jesus, you will also love his appearing. It is certain every man that loveth the Lord Jesus hasteneth to the coming of the Lord, and it must be so in reason. For if you love any, you must needs love their presence. And seeing the apostle hath chosen out this note, why should not we press it in our examination of ourselves, whereby we may know whether we love the Lord Jesus or not? Whether we desire to be with the Lord? Whether we can say with St. Paul, "we desire to be at home, and to be with the Lord?"

Thirdly, Another property of love is, he that loveth is ever ready to speak of the party beloved; to fall into his praises, and to keep no measure in it. So is it in this

love to the Lord Jesus. Do you profess to love the Lord, and yet never delight to speak of him? nor delight to hear others speak of him? Mariners are delighted to talk of their voyages, and soldiers of their battle; and if you delight in the Lord, certainly your tongues will be much in speaking of him, you will be ready to do it upon all occasions. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." And if love to the Lord abound in your hearts, this love will be expressed by your tongues, upon all occasions. And therefore you may judge of the measure of your love by this. And now what will you say for yourselves, that you speak no more upon those several occasions that you meet with in the world? Is it because you are ashamed to make an open profession of Christ? Certainly it is not a sign that you love the Lord Jesus. For he that loveth is never ashamed; because whom a man loveth he magnifieth, he prizeth much, he hath a high esteem of him. And therefore that bashfulness and fearfulness that you object will not keep you back, if you love the Lord in sincerity. Or is it because you cannot speak? Because you are not able to do it as well as others? Why? when you love any one, that love will teach you to speak, it will quicken the dullest invention. Love sharpeneth, and maketh the rudest tongue eloquent. It is the nature of love to set the heart to work, and when the heart is set on work, the "tongue will be as the pen of a ready writer." You know how the apostle sets it forth, "Our heart is enlarged to you." Love openeth the heart wide, and the heart openeth the mouth. Therefore if you love the Lord much, you will speak much of him.

Fourthly, Love will do and suffer much for the party beloved. As St. Paul was abundant in love, so was he abundant in labours likewise; and whosoever aboundeth in love, will abound in works also. Therefore see what you do for the Lord Jesus; see what you suffer for his sake. When Christ came to St. Peter, and asked him that question, "Lovest thou me?" and Peter had

appealed to him that he did, he bids him shew his love by the fruit of it, "Feed my lambs:" and as that was the work that Christ put Peter upon for the trial of his love, so I may say to every one of you, if you will shew that you love the Lord Jesus, do the works that belong to your particular place. For every calling hath a particular work. If you love the Lord, be diligent in that calling which Christ hath given you to do him service in. It was Christ's own speech, "I have glorified thy name;" that is, in that charge thou gavest me to perform. So you must shew your love to God in doing the actions of your particular callings diligently. You know, when that woman's heart abounded in love to Christ, it found out a way to shew itself in breaking the box of ointment, and pouring it on his head. And as you will be ready to do much, so you will be ready to suffer much also. These two I put together, because suffering is a kind of doing; it is a doing of things, when there is pain or difficulty. Now if you love the Lord Jesus, see what you will suffer for his sake; those that we love we are exceeding ready to suffer for. A husband that loves his spouse, is exceeding ready and willing to suffer any displeasure of parents, or friends; to suffer the loss of his estate, discredit in the world; he is ready to break through all, and to do any thing, so he may obtain her love at the last. So, if you love the Lord Jesus, you will suffer any thing for his sake. And therefore it was the commendation of the Hebrews, an argument of their sincerity, that they "suffered the spoiling of their goods with joy." Whence came this, but from their love to the Lord? They were so far from being backward to suffer, that they were glad to have the opportunity to suffer somewhat for his sake.

You will say, perhaps, "I am ready to do much for the Lord, and I hope I am not backward to suffer for him." It is well, if it be so; but let me ask you, in what manner do you do what you do? The manner of your doing is all in all. You must do and suffer, but

this must be willingly. A man may do much for the Lord out of fear of hell, and this is little worth. It should all come from the heart, or it avails not. You may keep the sabbath, and present yourselves at prayers and at sermons; it is well you do so, but yet when "your hearts are going after covetousness," the Lord looks upon this as upon a mere formal performance. It is another kind of doing that the Lord requires at your hands. It may be you perform duties in secret, but that is not enough. You may perform them as a task, and are glad when the business is done; but when you do it out of love, you will do it in another manner, not in this formality. If you serve the Lord out of love, it is not the praying to him morning and evening that will content you, but it is the working upon your hearts, till you have brought them to a good frame of grace. You will never give over till your hearts are quickened in prayer; till you have found that God hath answered you, till you have had experience of his mercy and loving-kindness towards you.

Another property of love is, it is full of heat. Therefore, in Cant. viii. 6, it is compared to coals of juniper: and from that phrase used in Matt. xxiv. 5, "Iniquity shall abound, and the love of many shall wax cold," we learn that love is hot. Therefore, if you would know whether you love the Lord Jesus or not, consider what heat and what fire there is in you. Now what are the properties of fire? Wherein doth love and that agree? 1. Fire, you know, is the most active of all elements. Cold benumbeth a man, and is the greatest enemy to action. If you love the Lord Jesus, you shall find your love will have that property of fire, to set all on work in you; it will set your tongue on fire, your hands on fire, your head and heart on fire; every thing that is within you will be working, and doing some service or other to the Lord. When a man wanteth love, he is as a man benumbed, as a man frozen, not apt to any thing; but the more love, the more aptness and readiness he hath to

every good work. 2. Fire is of a quick nature, so also is love. Therefore love hates nothing so much as delays. Consider this therefore; are you speedy in execution? If you love the Lord, you will not put off from day to day any thing that is to be done: you will not say with yourself, "I will change my course of life, but not yet:" no, if you love the Lord, you will do it presently. 3. Besides, fire is vehement; love is the same. Look what a man loves, upon that he bestows the top of all his affections, and the main strength of his intentions runs that way. Examine whether you love the Lord Jesus or not. If you love him, you will look upon other things, as regarding them not; you will grieve for them "as if you grieved not, and rejoice as if you rejoiced not; you will use the world as if you used it not." Your heart will be taken up about Christ, and about the things that belong to the kingdom of God; your intentions will be set upon the things that belong to the service of God, and your own salvation. This is a thing by which you may plainly discern the truth of your love. Examine therefore what it is upon which you bestow the main of your intentions. If you love the Lord Jesus, and be rightly affected towards him, you will esteem nothing great but the enjoying of his favour, and nothing of worse consequence than the loss of it; nothing will be of any great moment to you, but only sin and grace; sin that displeaseth him, and grace that brings you into favour with him. As for other things, you will look upon them as trifles. You will not put the strength of your minds to any thing else but him. 4. Fire hath also this property, that it is still enlarging itself, still growing, turning every thing into its own nature; it is overcoming, and it is not ready to be overcome. This is noted, Cant. viii. 6, "Much water cannot quench it, it is as strong as death." Now death you know overcomes all; so will love, it will break through all impediments. Consider, whether you find this disposition in yourselves, that your hearts are still drawing nearer and nearer to the Lord, that they are still aspiring

towards heaven, that you are still going onward, and thriving in the work of grace.

Another property of love is this, it is willing to do all kind offices, and looks for no recompence. Love, where-soever it is found, is free in doing what it doth, and examines neither how much it should do, nor how much it shall receive for doing it. So if your love be right to the Lord, you will not stand considering what you are bound to do of necessity; whether you are bound to pray in your families or not, or whether you are bound to keep the sabbath so exactly as is commanded; whether you are bound to abstain from giving so much liberty to yourselves in vain speeches; but love will rather say, "What shall I do to recompence the Lord?" It will be devising what to do, it will be glad of any occasion of doing any thing that may be acceptable to God. When you set limits to yourselves, and are afraid of going too far and doing too much, it is a sign what you do cometh not from love. If then you love the Lord Jesus aright, why do you not labour to exceed in the duties of obedience? Why do you blame those that go farther than yourselves are willing to go? Why do you quarrel with that exactness and strictness which is required in walking in the ways of God? Love is abundant in the work it doth, and if you love the Lord, you will not limit yourselves, you will not think thus, "I will do as much as will bring me to heaven and no more; I will take just so much pains as that I may not be damned; but I will do no more than needs; this I hope may be spared, and I may go to heaven well enough notwithstanding." No, if there be love in you, you will strive to do to the utmost of your power. Again, you will not be so exact, nor indent with the Lord what he shall do to you; but though he be slow in rewarding you; though he stay long, and suffer you to go on without taking any notice of you, as it were; nay, perhaps send you many afflictions and persecutions, poverty, trouble, or sickness; though the Lord doth not do what you expected, yet your love will be free, it will go on;

you will be ready to say as St. Paul did, "I know whom I have trusted." That is, he was resolved to serve the Lord, to do his utmost; though the Lord did reserve himself and the recompence of reward to a farther time.

Again, you may judge of your love to the Lord Jesus by another property of love, which is a hatred of sin; examine yourselves by this, for it is a sure rule, if you love the Lord, you will hate that which is evil. And here, lest you mistake the being angry at sin, because perhaps it hath brought you into trouble and distress, for hatred thereof; I will lay before you three things wherein hatred differs from anger, that you may thereby examine yourselves whether you hate sin or not: First, Hatred is more of generals. If a man hate drunkenness, he hates it in all drunkards. A man is angry with this or that particular, but hatred is of all. I would ask you, do you hate all sin, all that belongs to sin? If it be this or that sin only, you are but *angry* with sin, you do not hate it. For hatred falls always upon the general. Examine therefore if you find this disposition in your hearts, that you hate every sin. Whatsoever is contrary to the Lord, do you hate, resist, and strive against that? If so, this is a sign that you love the Lord, and truly hate sin. Secondly, Hatred desires the utter destruction of the thing it hates, anger doth not so. Anger desires but a revenge proportionable to the injury. Therefore we say there is a kind of justice in anger: it would not have the party that it is angry with to be destroyed, but it would have him sensible of its displeasure; it would have something done that might answer the injury that is offered; but hatred desires the destruction of a thing utterly. Now are you so disposed with respect to your sins? Do you desire to have them wholly rooted out? to have your lusts thoroughly and perfectly mortified? Are you willing to have sin clean taken away? If so, it is a sign you hate it indeed. Lastly, Hatred differeth from anger in this, that it is implacable. Anger is a sudden passion that dies away after a time: hatred comes

from judgment. It is a bent, a disposition, and frame of the will that continues. Is your disposition such to your sins? Examine yourselves. Nothing is more frequent than to be angry at some sin for the present; but does your hatred continue? If not, you do but fall out with your sins, and grow friends with them again. If you hated them as you should, you would never return to amity with them more. If you thus hate sin, this is an argument of your love to the Lord Jesus.

Suffer me now to try a little farther if you love him or not. Do you not knowingly grieve him, and vex him from day to day? If this be your case, it is certain you love him not. Some there are that profess much love to the Lord Jesus, but yet spend their time idly, are diligent in no calling, but waste their precious opportunities of doing good in doing nothing that is profitable, either to themselves or others; but eat and drink, and rise up to play. It is the case of many of our young gentlemen. A shameful thing before men, and abominable in the sight of God, that men should live like beasts, and make their souls like the souls of swine, serving for nothing but to keep their bodies from putrefaction; doing so much the less work, because they have the more wages; burying so many precious talents, (whereof their time is the chief, because it helpeth to improve all the rest,) of which they shall give an exact account at that day, "When God shall judge the secrets of men's hearts according to our gospel." Do you profess that you love the Lord Jesus, and do you neglect him thus? As I speak to those that are young, that spend their time in doing nothing; so I say the same to those that are of more years, that waste their lives in doing something indeed, but it is not that which they should do; or in doing it in another manner than they ought; those that are so drowned in business, that they have no vacancy to feed their souls within, to clothe them with graces. For you must know, my brethren, that your souls have need

to be trimmed every morning, as well as your bodies ; they have need of breakfast, and dinner, and exercise, as well as the body. And as you fail in giving this to the soul daily, so you shall find it proportionably languish and faint. Do you think that you love the Lord Jesus in good earnest, and yet have scarce leisure to think of him from morning to night ; that you cannot take time to speak to him, to seek him, nor to prepare your hearts for him ? But, it may be, you will say that your meaning is good, though you frequently act amiss, and that you are well affected to Christ, and therefore surely you do not hate him. My brethren, you are deceived in this ; your meaning is not good ; for while you cast the commandments of God behind you, you cast him away ; and while you lightly and carelessly deny the Lord by your evil deeds, you cannot mean well. At best it can only be said, you do not mean at all. Try yourselves then ; if you love the Lord, you will reverence him. You know, whom we love we reverence, and dare not do any thing improper in their sight. Take any one whom we love, or whose good opinion we seek for, and we had rather that all the world should see us do an unseemly thing, than that he should ; and certainly if you love the Lord, you would not dare to provoke him to his face. Therefore this carelessness in serving of him, this accounting it a light matter to commit sin, is a certain sign of want of love to the Lord Jesus.

In the second place, as you may try your love by your taking care not to offend God, so you may try it by your sorrow after you have offended him. So much sorrow for sin, so much love. And you may take it for a sure rule ; in what measure any man desires to please the Lord, in that measure he will be grieved that he hath displeased him. Therefore examine yourselves. Have you sinned against him many times, and do you look back upon those sins in a careless manner ? Be sure you love him not. If a child, or a wife, commit any thing against a father or husband, and they shall withdraw themselves,

and profess themselves displeased, and yet the child or wife be never troubled at this, is it not plain they do not love him? So likewise your want of sorrow for sin is a sure argument that you love not the Lord.

And yet how many motives have you to love him, besides what have already been laid down? As first, it is this love that sets a price on all that you do. As this stamp is set on your actions more or less, so they are more or less acceptable. This was that which set a price on the widow's mite, that will set a price on a cup of cold water. This set a price on Abel's offering, and made it more acceptable than his brother's. The meanest service, when it hath this stamp on it, is current and good in God's sight, he accepts it; but the greatest performance without it is nothing. "If thou give thy body to be burned, without love it is nothing," 1 Cor. xiii. 3.

Besides this, consider, that if you love the Lord, you shall be no loser by it. In all other love a man seems to be a loser; for when you bestow your time, your pains, your money, on another, you have so much the less yourself. Hence it is that men are so backward to love in good earnest. They love in shew and in compliment; that is easy; but to love in deed is difficult, because it takes somewhat from them. But in loving the Lord it is not so. When you give the Lord your hearts he will give you them every jot again, and reserve not any for himself. My meaning is, whatsoever you bestow on the Lord, all the love that you give to him redounds to your advantage, you gain by it all. As we see, Isaiah xlviii. 17, "I am the Lord that teacheth thee to profit; for if thou keep my commandments, thy prosperity shall be as a flood, and thy rejoicing as the waves of the sea." As it is said of the sabbath, so I may say of this commandment, and all the rest, it was made for man, and not man for this; that is, for the profit of man, for the advancement of man. Thy loving the Lord is for thy advantage, thou gainest by it: as it is Deut. v. 29,

“Oh,” saith he, “that there were a heart in this people to love me, and to fear me; then it should go well with them, and their children after them:” not that I might gain, and you lose, but that it might go well with you and your children for ever. Perhaps you think with yourself, “If I love God, I shall lose much liberty, much delight.” No; though you seem to lose this when you give your heart to the Lord, yet you gain all this; the Lord gives you your heart again, and gives you leave to dispose of it; he gives you leave to love your friends, to love your wife and children, as long as you do it lawfully; only you must do it at his command. Yea, when we give our hearts to the Lord, he not only gives us them again, but he gives them much better than he received them. As the heavens return vapours again that arise out of the earth in pure water, much better than they received them; so if thy heart, thy impure, thy sinful heart ascend to the Lord, he will give it thee again much better. As the earth receives the sea-water into its bowels, muddy, salt, and brinish, and after having strained and purified it, returns it in springs and fountains, pure, and clean, and fresh; so the Lord doth with us. If you would give your heart’s desire, your affections to him, you should have all again, only with this difference, your affections should be more pure, your thoughts cleansed, and all the faculties of your soul renewed. So that take a man that loves himself, and that thinks, “Well, say what you will, I will go mine own ways:” compare this man with another, that resolves thus with himself, “Well, from hence I will deny myself, and give my heart wholly to the Lord.” The question now is, which of these are gainers? I say, the latter hath as much liberty and as much power of his own heart, as much use of all that is within him, as the other. All the difference is, the one is an unjust detainer, the Lord hath made the other steward of his own heart. So that the Lord hath your heart, and yet it is your own heart; you may dispose of it as a steward

under your master. You have it as before, only now you dispose of it by his appointment, before at your own.

My brethren, we must add for conclusion, that it is not every kind of love that the Lord accepts. But, you must love him "with all your heart, and with all your soul;" you know that this is every where required in the Scriptures. That is, the Lord will have the whole stream of your affections, desires, and intentions, and your endeavours to run to him; there must not any rivulet run out of it; it must not be drained away, but the whole stream must be bestowed upon him; there must be no division there. The Lord must have all, and there is good reason, because he bestowed all on you. If the Lord bestow all on you, and you bestow but half on him, there would be no equality. You must therefore bestow all on him, and love him with all your heart, and with all your soul, and that makes the match between you. Now, when it is said, "Thou shalt love the Lord with all thy mind, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul," the meaning is, that all that is in a man must be set on work to serve the Lord; the mind to think on him, to meditate on his glorious works, to have a right knowledge of him; the memory to remember him, his benefits, his statutes, and his ordinances: and so the rest of his faculties.

Again, it is required that "you love the Lord with all your might, and with all your strength." Now, to love the Lord with all our might, is so to improve all the means, all the strength, and all the ability we have above others, that we may serve the Lord with it more than others. For instance: a rich and great man hath more might than another, can rule and command more than a poor man can; so he must exceed him in proportion in serving the Lord with these abilities. This it is for a rich man to love the Lord with all his might; that is, to love him so much more than a poor man, to bestow more on him, to do more for him, as his riches make him more able than the other. For such an one to love him no more than another, that hath less might, the Lord will

not take this love ; but will deal with him as many landlords with their tenants, when they bring less rent than is due ; they will receive none ; for they say, “ So much is due.” If you be a rich man, if you be a magistrate, and have great opportunities to serve the Lord, and do but a little, he will not accept it at all. You must love the Lord with all your might, for God requires this at your hands. He saith, “ To whom much is given, of him much shall be required.” He saith not, I leave it to him to do more or less, but will exact it according to the measure he hath received. Therefore consider with yourself, what power God hath put into your hands more than others. When you send a servant to market, as you put more money into his hands, so you expect he should bring home more than another that hath less ; so the Lord doth with men. He sends men into the world, as men are sent to market, he gives a larger portion to some than to others. To some he gives five talents, to some three, to some two ; and expects that they should bring home according to the price they have in their hands ; that is, according to the might, according to the strength and opportunity he hath given them. For, you must know, that the Lord observes an exact difference between man and man. It may be, you live under better means than another ; you have had a better education than another ; you have more knowledge in the ways of God than another ; the Lord hath helped you more by the inward suggestions of his Spirit than another : he therefore looks that you should bring forth more fruit than another. And so for all other abilities and advantages. The Lord expects at our hands, that we should love him with all our might. It is not that the Lord requires no more, but that you live soberly, and free from gross sins. No, God does look for more ; he requires of every man according to his strength and ability.

Having spoken thus much of faith and love, it remains that we add something touching good works, the fruit thereof ; for saith the apostle, when you have to do with

Christ Jesus, to be ingrafted into him, to make yourselves first acceptable to God through him, all the works you do are no more than the omission of them. "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision." But what is of moment then? *Faith* (saith he.) But what faith must that be? Such a faith as begets *love*. And what love must that be? Such a love as sets you on work. So that you have a chain here consisting of three links; *faith*, which, when it is right, will beget love; and *love*, which, when it is right, will shew itself by *good works*: "faith which works by love." So the point we will deliver to you out of these words, shall be this: That we are to be judged, not only by our faith and love, but also by our works; that no man hath faith and love, but works will follow. This is a very necessary point, because men are ready to applaud themselves on their knowledge, their good meaning, their honest desires, and in the mean time fail in their lives and actions; whereas wherever faith and love are, good works are never disjoined from them. Though it be true, that there are abundance of good works where there is no sincerity, no pureness within; yet, on the other side, wheresoever there is sincerity, there are good works. Though many times the outside be clean, when the inside is not, yet the inside is never clean but the outside is clean too. Though it be not a good rule to say, "I have good works, therefore my heart is right;" yet it is a good rule to say on the other side, "I want good works, therefore my heart is not right."

Here some men may object, "But the will is often taken for the deed, and if the will be present, though the action do not follow, yet we are accepted." To this I answer, This holds only when there is some impediment which you cannot remove. As for example; a man hath a desire to do good to such poor people, but he wants means to do it: in this case the Lord accepts the will for the deed. And so it is in every thing else. When you have a desire, and there cometh some impediment, that it is not in your

power to remove, then the will is accepted. Again, sometimes a man is ignorant of some particulars, and he hath a desire to obey God in all things; here the will is accepted for the deed, though he be not come to that degree of perfection as others.

Well then, seeing we are to be judged according to our works, and that a desire of doing good works is not accepted in their stead, but only where the impediments of them cannot be removed, or a man is ignorant of what ought to be done, I exhort you to add to your faith diligent love; otherwise it is but a dead thing, a dead plant that keepeth the room idle. If there be true love in you, shew it by bringing forth the fruit of good works. We are called into the Lord's vineyard for the same purpose; it is not for you now to stand idle; the time of your standing still is past; it is for you now to work, for you are now come into the day. That exhortation is excellent, "Let us not sleep as do others," 1 Thes. v. 6, 7, 8. Those that are still in the night, it better beseems them to sleep and do nothing; but let not us sleep, for we are of the day. Let it not be with you as with others, to be much in speech only, but labour to be much in action. As it was said to Gideon, "Up, and be doing, and the Lord shall be with thee." So I say to every one, Up, and be doing, and the Lord shall be with you; that is, though perhaps you do not find that vigour of spirit, yet be doing notwithstanding; it is the wisest way; for that doing will increase the grace within you. Exercise increaseth health, as well as health enables to exercise; so the use of grace will increase it. Motion causeth heat, as well as cometh from heat; so every good action proceedeth from grace, and good actions increase grace. And therefore be still acting, and judge of yourselves by that; for what else is grace, what else is that you call Christianity, but to do that which another man cannot do? Therefore if there be a difference between you and others, shew it by doing that which another man cannot do; by exposing yourselves to that danger, to those losses for any good cause, which

another would not do ; by spending more time in prayer, by taking more pains with your hearts from day to day, by keeping the sabbath better than others ; by being exact in looking to your ways, that you may “ be holy in all manner of conversation,” which other men will not do. This is that which will make the world believe, that you are Christians in good earnest, and not in shew only. And truly, there is no other way ; this doing is that which makes a man excellent. You hear men complain of the barrenness of their grounds many times ; we may likewise justly take up the complaint against the barrenness of the lives of men.

How goodly a sight it is when a man looks into his husbandry, to see the vine full of clusters, the furrows full of corn, the trees laden with fruit ? So it is the goodliest sight we can behold in God’s husbandry, to see men full of good works. I beseech you consider it seriously, and now set upon the doing of it while there is sand in the hour-glass. Your life will not last long, the day doth not last always, the night will come when no man can work. When a candle is put out, you may kindle it again ; when the sun is set, it riseth again ; but when our life is past, when the glass is run, it riseth no more, it is turned no more. “ It is appointed to all men once to die.” If ye might die twice or thrice, it were another case ; but now it is your wisdom while it is time, while this short day lasts, to do what you have to do with your might, because the time is short.

There is nothing that is a truer property of wisdom, than for a man to take hold on opportunities ; nor to lose a day, nay, not an hour in the day ; for time is most precious ; it is like gold, of which every shred is worth somewhat. It is your wisdom therefore to be often sowing seed to the Spirit. There is none of those good works, not the least of them, but will do you good in the latter end. For, alas ! what are your lives but your actions ? So much as you do, so much you live. Your lives are short of themselves, why do you make them shorter by

doing nothing ? For as we have said heretofore, one man may live more in one day, than another in twenty, because he doth more. You live more as you act more. Besides, what is it a man serves for in all his labour under the sun ? What is it he desires but comfort and contentment ? Now, this consists in doing, in working ; for further than there is working there is no delight. Therefore it was a wise saying in that philosopher, that the happiness and comfort that a man hath in this life consists not in abundance of wealth, in swimming in delights ; but it consists in doing the actions of a living man, which is the greatest comfort you can find here. Do the exercise and actions of holiness, and the more you do, the more comfort you shall have ; for even as light followeth the flame, so contentment followeth action. And what do you live for ? Is it not to glorify God ? You profess so much ; and how is it done ? Not by your desires or good meanings, but by your actions ; those are the things that men see and feel, and that glorify your heavenly Father. Let therefore the light of your good works shine before men, for “ herein is my Father glorified,” says Christ, “ that ye bring forth much fruit.” The doing much is that which brings glory to God ; the more you do, the more you glorify him. Again, one great end of your life, is to do good to mankind ; but do they fare the better for your good resolutions ? No, they fare the better only for that you do for them and to them. Only your actions benefit men.

Lastly, for yourselves, what is it that helpeth you, and doth you good ? Only your good deeds ; it is that which furthers your account. Every good work that a holy man doth from the time of his regeneration, (for till then no actions are spiritually good) is put upon his score, it stands upon his reckoning, there is nothing lost. The least good work is not done to no purpose, but the Lord will repay him the uttermost farthing. And when will the Lord repay ? Not only in the day of judgment, (then indeed you shall be paid to the uttermost,) but even in this

life: mark that too, "You shall have an hundred-fold here," saith Christ. "They that forsake father, or mother, or wife, or children, shall have an hundred-fold in this life." Therefore, if there be any wisdom in the world, this is wisdom, to be still doing good, to be much in gracious actions. Why do you trifle out your time therefore to no purpose? "Why sit you idle here?" Why do you not rise and bestir yourselves? Why do you not fill your lives with many actions of grace? You have good purposes in you, why do you not stir them up? It is true, indeed, we are becalmed many times because the Spirit doth not blow upon us; but yet, notwithstanding, if we would pray for the Spirit, the Lord would quicken us.

But you will say, "Alas! what shall we do? Our callings give us no opportunity to do that which other men's do. If we were preachers indeed, we should have nothing to mind but the things that belong to salvation; and then it would be easy." My brethren, you may find continual occasion of doing good actions every day, whatsoever your callings are. It is an error among the Papists, to think that alms-giving, fasting, and the like, are the only good actions. They are exceeding wide of the matter. Good actions are nothing else but to do the will of the Lord, and to bring forth fruit to his glory. The fruit of every tree in the orchard is but as the actions of every man; and then are the trees good to the husbandman, when they are full of fruit. Every action that you do in faith, is that fruit which God looks for; that fruit is good works. Therefore, to do the Lord's will is to do a good work. Now by this you may see what a large field you have for good works, in what calling soever you are.

To suffer imprisonment or disgrace for good causes, this is a good work; for it is a great work to suffer, and in that you do the will of the Lord. When a man lieth upon his bed, sick of a consumption or a fever, that he is not able to stir; to do this with obedience, to submit

then to the will of the Lord, is a good work. For as the bearing of a burden is a work, so to bear sickness and calamity aright, is a good work. To think, the Lord hath put me in this condition ; he might have given me strength to go abroad, but he hath been pleased to lay sickness upon me ; I say, the right bearing this burden is a good work. Again, to take pains with our hearts, to master our unruly affections, to get victory over our lusts, to tame our unbridled natures, in all the variety of occasions that we pass through, are so many good works ? In poverty, in riches, in honour, and disgrace, to behave ourselves as becomes Christians ; and to carry ourselves patiently and holily through them, is a good work ; and this belongs to every one, though his calling be never so mean. When Paul stood at the bar, and Festus reviled him, the suffering this patiently was a good work in Paul. Mark his manner of carriage in it, “ I am not mad, most noble Festus.” There was a work in that. So I may instance in the things wherein you may seem to do the least. The standing still in some cases is a work. The apostle makes this one of the chief among the great works that are to be done by Christians, “ To keep ourselves unspotted from the world ;” to pass through all occasions, and to be never the worse for them, to go through all defilements of this life, and not be tainted. And if this be a work, how much more is it then to be still doing, to be in action always ? Therefore do not say you want, when you shall always have occasion enough of that.

But you will say, these general exhortations are good, but what in particular would you have us do ? This especially : “ Contend for the faith once delivered to the saints.” Mark it, the work must be to contend for it. You must be men of contention, let the world say what they will of you. It is a duty that lies on you. It is that which the Spirit calls for from you, that ye be men that should contend. You must not do it coldly, and remissly, but earnestly strive for it. Let not pretence of indiscre-

tion hinder you ; for discretion when it is right, teacheth a man not to do less, but more³ and better than another man. Discretion makes no man less active, but it gives his actions a better tincture. So, then, say not we must be moderate ; for what is that moderation ? The moderation that keepeth from excess, is good ; but if you mean by moderation, to go a slow and easy pace in the ways of God, that is coldness, idleness, carelessness. It is the common faith, and every man hath part in it, and should contend according to his place and power, for every part of the faith or little matter thereof, (I speak now of the whole doctrine of faith) and should be exceeding exact in keeping of it, that it receive no detriment.

But this is not all that we would commend to you. There are other things, and those are, fasting and prayer. As in husbandry, so in the church, there are certain seasons of actions, and those seasons must not be omitted. The season for lifting up your heart to God in prayer is always, and in every thing ; for making your more solemn addresses to him, whenever occasion and opportunity of place and time offer ; of fasting joined with prayer, when extraordinary times and occasions call for it.

Again, there is one thing more that we will speak of ; that is, that every man for himself often renew his covenant with God concerning the amendment of his life ; more especially in times when the Lord hath stretched forth his hand against a church or nation. This is required, that at such a time they should come and enter into a covenant with God. We have many examples of it in Scripture. I say the Lord looks for this from every man in private, that he should in a particular manner consider, What have I done amiss in my life ? What have I done to provoke the Lord ? What sins of commission, and what sins of omission ? Have I been cold and lukewarm ? Have I been too conformable to the times ? For this is it that brings judgment upon a people. The saints when they are not zealous, when they fall from

their *first love*, may help forward a judgment as well as gross sinners, yea, and more too. Let every man therefore stir up himself to do his duty. In a word, we should strive and contend for the advancing of Christ's kingdom, for the furtherance of the gospel, for the good of mankind, for the flourishing of the church; and we should do it earnestly. We should contend with God in prayer, contend with our superiors by intreaty, with cold and lukewarm men by stirring them up, by "provoking one another to good works." These are the works that we exhort you to, and thus you shall be assured you have "faith that works by love."

END OF VOLUME V.

